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ALICE LORRAINE.

A TALE OF THE SOUTH DOWNS.

BY

RICHARD DODDRIDGE BLACKMORE,

AUTHOR OF "THE MAID OF SKER," "LORNA DOONE," ETC.

75511 a.c.

'Ὧδ' ἔχει σοι ταῦτα, καὶ δείξεις τάχα,
ἔιτ' εὐγενὴς πέφυκας, ἔιτ' ἐσθλῶν κακή.

SOPH. *Ant.*

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ALICE LORRAINE.

CHAPTER I.

A GOOD PARSON'S HOLIDAY.

On the second evening after the above discourse, a solitary horseman might have been seen (or, to put it more indicatively, a lonely ponyman was seen) pricking gallantly over the plains, and into the good town of Tonbridge, in the land of Kent. Behind him, and strapped to his saddle, he bore what used to be called a "vady;" that is to say, a small leather cylinder, containing change of raiment, and other small comforts of the traveller. The pony he bestrode was black, with a white star on her forehead, a sturdy trudger, of a spirited nature, and proud of the name of "Maggie." She had now recovered entirely from her

ten-guinea feast of dahlias, and was as pleased as the Rector himself, to whisk her tail in a change of air. Her pace was quite brisk, and her ears well pricked, especially when she smelled the smell which all country towns have of horses, and of rubbing down, hissing, and bucketing, and (best of all) of good oats jumping in a sieve among the chaff.

Maggie was proud of her master, and thought him the noblest man that ever cracked a whip, having imbibed this opinion from the young smart hunter, who was up to everything. And it might have fared ill with Jack the donkey, if Maggie had carried her master when that vile assault was perpetrated. But if Maggie was now in good spirits, what lofty flight of words can rise to the elation of her rider?

The Rector now, week after week, had been longing for a bit of sport. His open and jovial nature had been shut up, pinched, and almost poisoned, for want of proper outlet. He hated books, and he hated a pen, and he hated doing nothing; and he never would have horse-whipped Bonny, if he had been as he ought to be. Moreover, he had been greatly bothered, although he could not clearly put it,

by all those reports about Coombe Lorraine, and Sir Ronald's manner of scorning them.

But now here he was, in a wayfaring dress, free from the knowledge of any one, able to turn to the right or the left, as either side might predominate; with a bagful of guineas to spend as his own, and yet feel no remorse about them. Tush! that does not express it at all. With a bagful of guineas to spend as he chose, and rejoice in the knowledge that he was spending another man's money, for his own good, and the benefit of humanity. This is a fine feeling, and a rare one to get the luck of. Therefore, whosoever gets it, let him lift up his heart, and be joyful.

Whether from that fine diffidence, which so surely accompanies merit, or from honourable economy in the distribution of trust-funds, or from whatever other cause it was,—in the face of all the town of Tonbridge, this desirable traveller turned his pony into the quiet yard of that old-fashioned inn, "the Chequers." All the other ostlers grunted disapprobation, and chewed straws; while the one ostler of "the Chequers" rattled his pail with a swing of his elbow, hissed in the most enticing attitude, and made believe to expect it.

Mr. Hales, in the manner of a cattle-jobber (which was his presentment now), lifted his right leg over the mane of the pony, and so came downward. Everybody in the yard at once knew thoroughly well what his business was. And nobody attempted to cheat him in the inn; because it is known to be a hopeless thing to cheat a cattle-jobber, in any other way than by gambling. So that with little to say, or be said, this unclerkly clerk had a good supper, and smoked a wise pipe with his landlord.

Of course he made earnest inquiries about all the farmers of the neighbourhood, and led the conversation gently to the Grower and his affairs; and as this chanced to be Master Lovejoy's own "house of call" at Tonbridge, the landlord gave him the highest character, and even the title of "Esquire."

"Ah, yes," he exclaimed, with his rummer in one hand, and waving his pipe with the other; "there be very few in these here parts to compare with Squire Lovejoy. One of the true old Kentish stock, sir; none of your come-and-go bagmen. I have heered say that that land have been a thousand year in the family."

"Lord bless me!" cried Mr. Hales; "why,

we get back to the time of the Danes and Saxons!"

"There now!" said the landlord, giving him a poke of admiration with his pipe; "you knows all about it, as well as if I had told 'ee. And his family brought up so respectable! None of your sitting on pillions. A horse for his self, and a horse for his son, and a horse for his pretty darter. Ah, if I were a young man again—but there she be above me altogether! Though 'the Chequers,' to my thinking, is more to the purpose, than a bigger inn might be, sir."

"You are right, I believe," replied his guest. "How far may it be to Old Applewood farm?"

"Well, sir, how far? Why, let me see: a matter of about five mile, perhaps. You've heered tell of the garden of Eden, perhaps?"

"To be sure! Don't I read about it"—he was going to say "every Sunday," but stopped in time to dissemble the parson.

"And the finest ten mile of turnpike in England. You turns off from it, about four mile out. And then you keeps on straight forward."

"Thank you, my good friend. I shall ask

the way to-morrow. Your excellent punch is as good as a nightcap. But I want to combine a little pleasure with business, if I can, to-morrow. I am a bit of a sportsman, in a small way. Would Mr. Lovejoy allow me to cast a fly in his water, think you?"

"Ay, that he will, if you only tell him that you be staying at the 'Chequers Inn.'"

The Rector went to bed that night in a placid humour, with himself, and his landlord, and all the county. And sleeping well after change of air, a long ride, and a good supper, he awoke in the morning, as fresh as a lark, in a good state of mind for his breakfast.

Old Applewood farm was just "taking it easy," in the betwixt and between of hard work. The berry season was over now, and the hay was stacked, and the hops were dressed; John Shorne and his horses were resting freely, and gathering strength for another campaign—to cannonade London with apples and pears. All things had the smell of summer, passing rich, and the smell of autumn, without its weight leaning over the air. The nights were as warm as the days almost, yet soft with a mellow briskness; and any young man who looked out of his window

said it was a shame to go to bed. Some people have called this the "saddest time of the whole sad twelvemonth;" the middle or end of July, when all things droop with heavy leafiness. But who be these to find fault with the richest and goodliest prime of nature's strength? Peradventure the fault is in themselves. All seasons of the year are good to those who bring their seasoning.

And now, when field, and wood, and hedge stand up in flush of summering, and every bird, and bat, and insect of our British island is as active as he ought to be (and sometimes much too much so); also, when good people look at one another in hot weather, and feel that they may have worked too hard, or been too snappish when the frosts were on (which they always are, except in July), and then begin to wonder whether their children would like to play with the children of one another, because they cannot catch cold in such weather; and after that, begin to speak of a rubber in the bower, and a great spread of delightfulness;—when all this comes to pass, what right have we to make the worst of it?

That is neither here nor there. Only one thing is certain, that our good parson, looking

as unlike a parson as he could—and he had a good deal of capacity in that way—steered his pony Maggie round the corner into the Grower's yard, and looked about to see how the land lay. The appearance of everything pleased him well; for comfort, simplicity, and hospitality shared the good quarters between them. Even a captious man could hardly, if he understood the matter, find much fault with anything. The parson was not a captious man, and he knew what a good farmyard should be, and so he said "Capital, capital!" twice, before he handed Maggie's bridle to Paddy from Cork, who of course had run out with a sanguine sense of a shilling arrived.

"Is Squire Lovejoy at home?" asked the visitor, being determined to "spake the biggest," as Paddy described it afterwards. For the moment, however, he only stared, while the parson repeated the question...

"Is it the maisther ye mane?" said Paddy; "faix then, I'll go, and ax the missus."

But before there was time to do this, the Grower appeared with a spud on his shoulder. He had been in the hop-ground; and hearing a horse, came up to know what was toward. The two men looked at one another, with

mutual approval. The parson tall, and strong, and lusty, and with that straightforward aspect which is conferred, or at least confirmed, by life in the open air, field sports, good living, and social gatherings. His features, too, were clear and bold, and his jaws just obstinate enough to manage a parish; without that heavy squareness which sets church and parish by the ears. The Grower was of moderate height, and sturdy, and thoroughly useful; his face told of many dealings with the world; but his eyes were frank, and his mouth was pleasant. His custom was to let other people have their say before he spoke; and now he saluted Mr. Hales in silence, and waited for him to begin.

"I hope," said his visitor, "you will excuse my freedom in coming to see you thus. I am trying this part of the country, for the first time, for a holiday. And the landlord of the 'Chequers Inn' at Tonbridge, where I am staying for a day or two, told me that you perhaps would allow me to try for a fish in your river, sir."

"In our little brook! There be none left, I think. You are kindly welcome to try, sir. But I fear you will have a fool's errand of it.

We have had a young gentleman from London here, a wonderful angler, sure enough, and I do believe he hath caught every one."

"Well, sir, with your kind permission, there can be no harm in trying," said the Rector, laughing, in his sleeve, at Hilary's crude art compared with his own. "The day is not very promising, and the water of course is strange to me. But have I your leave to do my best?"

"Ay, ay, as long as you like. My ground goes as far up as there is any water, and down the brook to the turnpike road. We will see to your nag; and if you would like a bit to eat, sir, we dine at one, and we sup at seven; and there be always a bit in the larder 'tween whiles. Wil't come into house before starting?"

"I thank you for the kind offer; but I think I'd better ask you the way, and be off. There is just a nice little coil of cloud now; in an hour it may be gone; and the brook, of course, is very low and clear. Whatever my sport is, I shall call in and thank you, when I come back for my pony. My name is Hales, sir, a clerk from Sussex; very much at your service and obliged to you."

"The same to you, Master Halls; and I

wish you more sport than you will get, sir. Your best way is over that stile; and then when you come to the water, go where you will."

One more question, which I always ask; what size do you allow your fish to be taken?"

"What size? Why, as big, to be sure, as ever you can catch them. The bigger they are, the less bones they have."

With a laugh at this answer, the parson set off, with his old fly-book in his pocket, and a rod in his hand which he had borrowed (by grace of his landlord) in Tonbridge. His step was brisk, and his eyes were bright, and he thought much more of the sport in prospect than of the business that brought him there.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, as he hit on the brook, where an elbow of bank jutted over it, "very fine tackle will be wanted here, and one fly is quite enough for it. It must be fished downward, of course, because it cannot be fished upward. It will take all I know to tackle them."

So it did; and a great deal more than he knew. He changed his fly every quarter of an hour, and he tried every dodge of experience; he even tried dapping with the natural

fly, and then the blue-bottle and grasshopper; but not a trout could he get to rise, or even to hesitate, or show the very least sign of temptation.

So great was his annoyance (from surety of his own skill, and vain reliance upon it), that after fishing for about ten hours, and catching a new-born minnow, the Rector vehemently came to a halt, and repented that he had exhausted already his whole stock of strong language. When a good man has done this, a kind of reaction (either of the stomach or conscience) arises, and leads him astray from his usual sign-posts, whether of speech, or deed, or thought.

The Rev. Struan Hales sate down, marvelling if he were a clumsy oaf, and gave Hilary no small credit for catching such deeply sagacious and wary trout. Then he dwelled bitterly over his fate, for having to go and fetch his pony, and let every yokel look into his basket and grin at its beautiful emptiness. Moreover, he found himself face to face with starvation of the saddest kind; that which a man has challenged, and superciliously talked about, and then has to meet very quietly.

Not to exaggerate—if that were possible—

Mr. Hales found his inner man (thus rashly exposed to new Kentish air) "absolutely barking at him," as he strongly expressed it to his wife, as soon as he was truly at home again. But here he was fifty miles from home, with not a fishing-basket only, but a much nearer and dearer receptacle, full of the purest vacuity. "This is very sad," he said; and all his system echoed it.

CHAPTER II.

NOT TO BE RESISTED.

WHILE the Rector still was sitting on the mossy hump of an apple-tree, weary and disconsolate, listening to the murmuring brook, with louder murmurings of his own, he espied a light, well-balanced figure crossing the water on a narrow plank some hundred yards up the streamway.

"A pretty girl!" said the parson; "I am sure of it, by the way she carries herself. Plain girls never walk like that. Oh that she were coming to my relief! But the board looks rather dangerous. I must go and help her. Ah, here she comes! What a quick light foot! My stars, if she hasn't got a basket! Nothing for me, of course. No such luck, on this most luckless of all days."

Meanwhile she was making the best of her way, as straight as the winding stream allowed,

towards this ungrateful and sceptical grumbler; and presently she turned full upon him, and looked at him, and he at her.

"What a lovely creature!" thought Mr. Hales; "and how wonderfully her dress becomes her! Why, the mere sight of her hat is enough to drive a young fellow out of his mind almost! Now I should like to make her acquaintance; if I were not starving so. 'Acrior illum cura domat,' as Sir Roland says."

"If you please, sir," the maiden began, with a bright and modestly playful glance, "are you Mr. Halls, who asked my father for leave to fish this morning?"

"Hales, fair mistress, is my name; a poor and unworthy clerk from Sussex."

"Then, Mr. Hales, you must not be angry with me for thinking that you might be hungry."

"And—and thirsty!" gasped the Rector. "Goodness me, if you only knew my condition, how you would pity me!"

"It occurred to me that you might be thirsty too," she answered, producing from her basket, a napkin, a plate, a knife and fork, half a loaf, and something tied up in a cloth, whose fragrance went to the bottom of the parson's

heart; and after that a stone pipkin, and a half-pint horn, and last of all a pinch of salt. All these she spread on a natural table of grass, which her clever eyes discovered over against a mossy seat.

"I never was so thankful in all my life—I never was; I never was. My pretty dear, what is your name, that I may bless you every night?"

"My name is Mabel Lovejoy, sir. And I hope that you will excuse me, for having nothing better to bring than this. Most fishermen prefer duck, I know; but we happened only to have in the larder this half, or so, of a young roast goose——"

"A goose! An infinitely finer bird. And so much more upon it! Thank God it wasn't a duck, my dear. Half a duck would scarcely be large enough to set my poor mouth watering. For goodness' sake, give me a drop to drink! What is it—water?"

"No, sir, ale; some of our own brewing. But you must please to eat a mouthful first. I have heard that it is bad to begin with a drink."

"Right speedily will I qualify," said the parson, with his mouth quite full of goose;

"delicious,—most delicious! You must be the good Samaritan, my dear; or at any rate you ought to be his wife. Your very best health, Mistress Mabel Lovejoy; may you never do a worse action than you have done this day; and I never shall forget your kindness."

"Oh, I am so glad to see you enjoy it. But you must not talk till you have eaten every mouthful. Why, you ought to be quite famishing."

"In that respect I fulfil my duty. Nay more, I am downright famished."

"There is a little stuffing in here, sir; let me show you; underneath the apron. I put it there myself, and so I know."

"What most noble, most glorious, most transcendent stuffing! Whoever made that was born to benefit, retrieve, and exalt humanity."

"You must not say that, sir; because I made it."

"Oh, Dea, certe! I recover my Latin, under such enchantment. But how could you have found me out? And what made you so generously think of me?"

"Well, sir, I take the greatest interest in fishermen, because—oh, because of my brother Charlie: and one of our men passed you this

afternoon, and he said he was sure that you had caught nothing, because he heard you—he thought he heard you——"

"No, no, come now, complaining mildly,—not 'swearing,' don't say 'swearing.'"

"I was not going to say 'swearing,' sir. What made you think of such a thing? I am sure you never could have done it; could you? And so when you did not even come to supper, it came into my head that you must want refreshment; especially if you had caught no fish, to comfort you for so many hours. And then I thought of a plan for that, which I would tell you, in case I should find you unlucky enough to deserve it."

"I am unlucky enough to deserve it thoroughly; only look here, pretty Mistress Mabel." With these words he lifted the flap of his basket, and showed its piteous emptiness.

"West Lorraine!" she cried—"West Lorraine!" For his name and address were painted on the inside wicker of the lid. "Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Hales: I had no right to notice it."

"Yes, you had. But you have no right to turn away your head so. What harm has West

Lorraine done you, that you won't even look at its rector?"

"Oh, please not; oh, please don't! I never would have come, if I could have only dreamed——"

"If you could have dreamed what? Pretty Mistress Mabel, a parson has a right to an explanation, when he makes a young lady blush so."

"Oh, it was so cruel of you! You said you were a clerk, of the name of 'Halls!'"

"So I am, a clerk in holy orders; but not of the name of 'Halls.' That was your father's mistake. I gave my true name; and here you see me very much at your service, ma'am. The uncle of a fine young fellow, whose name you never heard, I daresay. Have you ever happened to hear of a youth called Hilary Lorraine?"

"Oh, now I know why you are come! Oh dear! It was not for the fishing, after all! And perhaps, you never fished before. And everything must be going wrong. And you are come to tell me what they think of me. And very likely you would be glad if you could put me in prison!"

"That would be nice gratitude; would it

not? You are wrong in almost every point. It happens that I have fished before; and that I did come for the fishing partly. It happens that nothing is going wrong; and I am not come to say what they think of you; but to see what I think of you—which is a very different thing."

"And what do you think of me?" asked Mabel, casting down her eyes, standing saucily, and yet with such a demure expression, that his first impulse was to kiss her.

"I think that you are rogue enough to turn the head of anybody. And I think that you are good enough to make him happy ever afterwards."

"I am not at all sure of that," she answered, raising her sweet eyes, and openly blushing; "I only know that I would try. But every one is not like a clergyman, to understand good stuffing. But if I had only known who you were, I would never have brought you any dinner, sir."

"What a disloyal thing to say! Please to tell me why I ought to starve, for being Hilary's uncle."

"Because you would think that I wanted to coax you to—to be on my side, at least."

"To make a goose of me, with your goose! Well, you have me at your mercy, Mabel. I shall congratulate Hilary on having won the heart of the loveliest, best, and cleverest girl in the county of Kent."

"Oh no, sir, you must not say that, because I am nothing of the sort; and you must not laugh at me, like that. And how do you know that he has done it? And what will every one say, when they hear that he—that he would like to marry the daughter of a Grower?"

"What does his father say? That is the point. It matters very little what others say. And I will not conceal from you, pretty Mabel, that his father is bitterly set against it, and turned him out of doors, when he heard of it."

"Oh, that is why he has never written. He did not know how to break it to me. I was sure there was something bad. But of course I could expect nothing else. Poor, poor sillies, both of us! I must give him up, I see I must. I felt all along that I should have to do it."

"Don't cry so; don't cry, my dear, like that. There is plenty of time to talk of it. Things will come right in the end, no doubt. But what does your father say to it?"

"I scarcely know whether he knows it yet. Hilary wanted to tell him; but I persuaded him to leave it altogether to me. And so I told my mother first; and she thought we had better not disturb my father about it, until we heard from Hilary. But I am almost sure sometimes that he knows it, and is not at all pleased about it; for he looks at me very strangely. He is the best and the kindest man living almost; but he has very odd ways sometimes; and it is most difficult to turn him."

"So it is with most men who are worth their salt. I despise a weathercock. Would you like me to come in and see him; or shall I fish a little more first? I am quite a new man since you fed me so well; and I scarcely can put up with this disgrace."

"If you would like to fish a little longer," said Mabel, following the loving gaze, which (with true angling obstinacy) lingered still on the coy fair stream, "there is plenty of time to spare. My father rode off to Maidstone, as soon as he found that you were not coming in to supper; and he will not be back till it is quite dark. And I should have time for a talk with my mother, while you are attempting to catch a trout."

"Now, Mabel, Mabel, you are too disdainful. Because I am not my own nephew (who learned what little he knows altogether from me), and because I have been so unsuccessful, you think that I know nothing; women always judge by the event, having taken the trick from their fathers perhaps. But you were going to tell me something, to make up for my want of skill."

"Yes; but you must promise not to tell any one else, upon any account. My brother Charlie found it out; and I have not told even Hilary of it, because he could catch fish without it."

"You most insulting of all pretty maidens, if you despise my science thus, I will tell Sir Roland that you are vain and haughty."

"Oh dear!"

"Very ill-tempered."

"No, now, you never could say that."

"Clumsy, ill-dressed, and slatternly."

"Well done, well done, Mr. Hales!"

"Yes, and fearfully ugly."

"Oh!"

"Aha! I have taken your breath away with absolute amazement. I wish Hilary could see you now; he'd steal something very delightful

and then knock his excellent uncle down. But now, make it up, like a dear good girl; and tell me this great secret."

"It is the simplest thing in the world. You just take a little bit of this—see here, I have some in my basket; and cut a little delicate strip, and whip it on the lower part of your fly. I have done it for Charlie many a time. I will do one for you, if you like, sir."

"Very well. I will try it, to please you; and for the sake of an experiment. Good-bye, good-bye till dark, my dear. We shall see whether a clerk can catch fish or no."

When Mr. Hales returned at night to the hospitable old farm-house, he carried on his ample back between two and three dozen goodly trout; for many of which he confessed himself indebted to Mabel's clever fingers. Mrs. Lovejoy had been prepared by her daughter to receive him; but the Grower was not yet come home from Maidstone; which, on the whole, was a fortunate thing. For thus the Rector had time enough to settle with his hostess what should be done on his part and on hers, towards the removal, or at any rate the gradual reduction, of the many stumbling-blocks that lay, as usual, upon true love's course. For

both foresaw that if the franklin's pride should once be wounded, he would be certain to bar the way more sternly than even the baronet himself. And even without that, he could hardly be expected to forego, all in a moment, his favourite scheme above described, that Mabel's husband should carry on the ancestral farm, and the growth of fruit. In his blunt old fashion, he cared very little for baronets, or for Norman blood; and like a son of Tuscan soil, was well content to lead his life in cleaving paternal fields with the hoe, and nourishing household gods, and hearth.

CHAPTER III.

ABSURD SURDS.

It is a fine thing to have quarters in an English country-town, where nobody knows who the sojourner is, and nobody cares who he may be. To begin (at gentle leisure) to feel interest in the place, and quicken up to the vein of humour throbbing through the High Street. The third evening cannot go over one's head without a general sense being gained of the politics of the town, and, far more important—the politicians; and if there only is a corporation, wisdom cries in the streets, and nobody can get on with anybody. However, when the fights are over, generally speaking, all cool down.

But this is about the last thing that a stranger should exert his intellect to understand. It would be pure waste of time; unless he means to buy a house and settle down, and

try to be an alderman in two years' time, and mount ambition's ladder even to the giddy height of mayoralty; till the hand of death comes between the rungs and vertically drags him downward. And even then, for three months shall he be, "our deeply lamented townsman."

But if this visitor firmly declines (as, for his health, he is bound to do) these mighty combats, which always have the eyes of the nation fixed on them—if he is satisfied to lounge about, and say "good morning" here and there, to ascertain public sentiment concerning the state of the weather, and to lay out sixpence judiciously in cultivating good society—then speedily will he get draughts of knowledge enough to quench the most ardent thirst; while the yawn of indolence merges in the quickening smile of interest. Then shall he get an insight into the commerce, fashion, religious feeling, jealousies, and literature of the town, its just and pleasant self-esteem, its tolerance and intolerance (often equally inexplicable), its quiet enjoyments, and, best of all, its elegant flirtations.

These things enabled Mr. Hales to pass an agreeable week at Tonbridge, and to form

acquaintance with some of its leading inhabitants; which in pursuit of his object he was resolved, as far as he could, to do. And from all of these he obtained very excellent tidings of the Lovejoys, as being a quiet, well-conducted, and highly respectable family, admitted (whenever they cared to be so) to the best society of the neighbourhood, and forgiven for growing cherries, and even for keeping a three-horsed van.

Also, as regarded his own impressions, the more he saw of Old Applewood farm, the more he was pleased with it and with its owners; and calling upon his brother parson, the incumbent of the parish, he found in him a congenial soul, who wanted to get a service out of him. For this Mr. Hales was too wide awake, having taken good care to leave sermons at home; because he had been long enough in holy orders to know what delight all parsons find in spoiling one another's holidays. Moreover, he had promised himself the pleasure of sitting in a pew, for once, repossessing the right to yawn *ad libitum*, and even fall into a murmurous nap, after exhausting the sweetness of the well-known Lucretian sentiment—to gaze in safety at another's labours; or, as the navvy

more tersely put it, when asked of his *summum bonum*, to "look on at t'other beggars."

Meanwhile, however, many little things were beginning to go crosswise. For instance, Hilary walked down headlong, being exceedingly short of cash, to comfort Mabel, and to get good quarters, and perhaps to go on about everything. Luckily, his uncle Struan met him in the street of Sevenoaks (whither he had ridden for a little change), and amazed him with very strong language, and begged him not to make a confounded fool of himself, and so took him into a public-house. The young man, of course, was astonished to see his uncle carrying on so, dressed as a layman, and roving about without any wife or family.

But when he knew for whose sake it was done, and how strongly his uncle was siding with him, his gratitude and good emotions were such that he scarcely could finish his quart of beer.

"My boy, I am thoroughly ashamed of you," said his uncle, looking queerly at him. "You are most immature for married life, if you give way to your feelings so."

"But uncle, when a man is down so much, and turned out of doors by his own father——"

"When a 'man!' When a 'boy' is what you mean, I suppose. A man would take it differently."

"I am sure I take it very well," said Hilary, trying to smile at it. "There, I will drink up my beer; for I know that sort of thing always vexes you. Now, can you say that I have kicked up a row, or done anything that I might have done?"

"No, my boy, no; quite the opposite thing: you have taken it most angelically."

"Angelically, without an angelus, uncle, or even a stiver in my pocket! Only the cherub aloft, you know——"

"I don't know anything about him; and the allusion, to my mind, is profane."

"Now, uncle, you are hyperclerical, because I have caught you dressed as a bagman!"

"I don't understand your big Oxford words. In my days they taught theology."

"And hunting; come now, Uncle Struan, didn't they teach you hunting?"

"Well," said the Rector, stroking his chin; "I was a poor young man, of course, and could not afford that sort of thing."

"Yes, but you did, you know, Uncle Struan; I have heard you boast of it fifty times."

"What a plague you are, Hilary! There may have been times—however, you are going on quite as if we were sitting and having a cozy talk after dinner at West Lorraine."

"I wish to goodness we were, my dear uncle. I never shall have such a pleasure again."

"My dear boy, my dear boy; to talk like that, at your time of life! What a thing love is, to be sure! However, in that state, a dinner is no matter."

"Well, I shall be off now for London again. A bit of bread and cheese, after all, is as good as anything. Good-bye, my dear uncle, I shall always thank you."

"You shall thank me for two things before you start. And you should not start, except that I know it to be at present best for you. You shall thank me for as good a dinner as can be got in a place like this; and after that for five gold guineas, just to go on for a bit with."

Thus the Rector had his way, and fed his nephew beautifully, and sent him back with a better heart in his breast, to meet the future. Hilary of course was much aggrieved, and inclined to be outrageous, at having walked four-and-twenty miles, with eager proceeding

at every step, and then being balked of a sight of his love. However, he saw that it was for the best; and five guineas (feel as you will) are something.

His good uncle paid his fare back by the stage, and saw him go off, and kissed hands to him; feeling greatly relieved as soon as ever he was round the corner; for he must have spoiled everything at the farm. Therefore this excellent uncle returned to his snug little sanded parlour, to smoke a fresh pipe; and to think, in its influence, how to get on with these new affairs.

Here were heaps of trouble rising; as peaks of volcanoes come out of the sea. And who was to know how to manage things, so as to make them all subside again? Hilary might seem easy to deal with, so long as he had no money; but even he was apt to take strange whims into his head, although he might feel that he could not pay for them. And then there was the Grower, an obstinate factor in any calculation; and the Grower's wife, who might appeal perhaps to the Attorney-General; also Sir Roland, with his dry unaccountable manner of regarding things; and last not least, the Rector's own superior part of his house-

hold. If he could not manage them, anybody at first sight would say that the fault must be altogether his own—that a man who cannot lay down the law to his own wife and daughters, really is no man; and deserves to be treated accordingly. Yet this depends upon special gifts. The Rector could carry on very well, when he understood the subject, even with his wife and daughters, till it came to crying. Still, in the end (as he knew in his heart), he always got the worst of it.

Now what would all these ladies say, if the incumbent of the parish, the rector of the rectory, the very husband or father of all of themselves—as the case might be—were to depart from his sense of right, and the principles he had laid down to them, to such an extent as to cherish Hilary in black rebellion against his own father? Suasion would be lost among them. It is a thing that may be tried, under favourable circumstances, as against one lady, when quite alone; but with four ladies all taking different views of the matter in question, set ready in a moment to combine against any form of reason,—a bachelor must be Quixotic, a husband and father idiotic, if he relies upon any other motive power than that of his legs.

But the Rector was not the man to run away, even from his own family. So, on the whole, he resolved to let things follow their own course, until something new should begin to rise. Except at least upon two little points—one, that Hilary should be kept from visiting the farm just now; and the other, that the Grower must be told of all this love-affair.

Mr. Hales, as an owner of daughters, felt that it was but a father's due, to know what his favourite child was about in such important matters; and he thought it the surest way to set him bitterly against any moderation, if he were left to find out by surprise what was going on at his own hearth. It happened, however, that the Grower had a shrewd suspicion of the whole of it, and was laughing in his sleeve, and winking (in his own determined way) at his good wife's manœuvres. "I shall stop it all, when I please," he said to himself, every night at bed-time; "let them have their little game, and make up their minds to astonish me." For he, like almost every man who has attained the age of sixty, looked back upon love as a brief excrescence, of about as much importance as a wart.

"Ay, ay, no need to tell me," he answered,

when Mrs. Lovejoy, under the parson's advice, and at Mabel's entreaty, broke the matter to him. "I don't go about with my eyes shut, wife. A man that knows every pear that grows, can tell the colour on a maiden's cheek. I have settled to send her away to-morrow to her Uncle Catherow. The old mare will be ready at ten o'clock. I meant to leave you to guess the reason; you are so clever all of you. Ha, ha! you thought the old Grower was as blind as a bat; now, didn't you?"

"Well, at any rate," replied Mrs. Lovejoy, giving her pillow an angry thump, "I think you might have consulted me, Martin; with half her clothes in the wash-tub, and a frayed ribbon on her Sunday hat! Men are so hot and inconsiderate. All to be done in a moment, of course! The least you could have done, I am sure, would have been to tell me beforehand, Martin; and not to pack her off like that."

"To be sure! Just as you told me, good wife, your plan for packing her off, for good! Now just go to sleep; and don't beat about so. When I say a thing I do it."

CHAPTER IV.

OUR LAD STEENIE.

WHEN the flaunting and the flouting of the summer-prime are over; when the leaves of tree, and bush, and even of unconsidered weeds, hang on their stalks, instead of standing upright, as they used to do; and very often a convex surface, by the cares of life, is worn into a small concavity: a gradual change, to a like effect, may be expected in the human mind.

A man remembers that his own autumn is once more coming over him; that the light is surely waning, and the darkness gathering in; that more of his plans are shed and scattered, as the sun "draws water" among the clouds, or as the gossamer floats idly over the sere and seeded grass. Therefore it is high time to work, to strengthen the threads of the wavering plan, to tighten the mesh of the woven web, to

cast about here and there for completion—if the design shall be ever complete.

So now, as the summer passed, a certain gentleman, of more repute perhaps than reputation, began to be anxious about his plans.

Sir Remnant Chapman owned large estates adjoining the dwindled but still fair acreage of the Lorraines, in the weald of Sussex. Much as he differed from Sir Roland in tastes and habits and character, he announced himself, wherever he went, as his most intimate friend and ally. And certainly he was received more freely than any other neighbour at Coombe Lorraine, and knew all the doings and ways of the family, and was even consulted now and then. Warm friendship, however, can scarcely thrive without mutual respect; and though Sir Remnant could never escape from a certain unwilling respect for Sir Roland, the latter never could contrive to reciprocate the feeling.

Because he knew that Sir Remnant was a gentleman of a type already even then departing, although to be found, at the present day, in certain parts of England. A man of fixed opinions, and even what might be accounted principles (at any rate by himself) concerning honour, and birth, and betting, and patriotism,

and some other matters, included in a very small et-cetera. It is hard to despise a man who has so many points settled in his system; but it is harder to respect him, when he sees all things with one little eye, and that eye a vicious one. Sir Remnant Chapman had no belief in the goodness of woman, or the truth of man—in the beautiful balance of nature, or even the fatherly kindness that comforts us. Therefore nobody could love him; and very few people paid much attention to his dull hatred of mankind. "Contempt," he always called it; but he had not power to make it that; neither had he any depth of root, to throw up eminence. A "bitter weed" many people called him; and yet he was not altogether that. For he liked to act against his nature, perhaps from its own perversity; and often did kind things, to spite his own spitefulness, by doing them. As for sense of right and wrong, he had none outside of his own wishes; and he always expected the rest of the world to move on the same low system. How could such a man get on, even for an hour, with one so different—and more than that, so opposite to him—as the good Sir Roland? Mr. Hales, who was not (as we know) at all a tight-laced man himself, and

may perhaps have been a little jealous of Sir Remnant, put that question to himself, as well as to his wife and family; and echo only answered "how?" However, soever, there was the fact; and how many facts can we call to mind ever so much stranger?

Sir Remnant's only son, Stephen Chapman, was now over thirty years of age, and everybody said that it was time for him to change his mode of life. Even his father admitted that he had made an unreasonably long job of "sowing his wild oats," and now must take to some better culture. And nothing seemed more likely to lead to this desirable result than a speedy engagement to an accomplished, sensible, and attractive girl. Therefore, after a long review and discussion of all the young ladies round, it had been settled that the heir of all the Chapmans should lay close siege to young Alice Lorraine.

"Captain Chapman"—as Stephen was called by courtesy in that neighbourhood, having held a commission in a fashionable regiment, until it was ordered to the war—this man was better than his father in some ways, and much worse in others. He was better, from weakness; not having the strength to work out works of

iniquity; and also from having some touches of kindness, whereof his father was intact. He was worse, because he had no sense of honour, no rudiment of a principle; not even a dubious preference for the truth, at first sight, against a lie. Captain Chapman, however, could do one manly thing, and only one. He could drive, having cultivated the art, in the time when it meant something. Horses were broken then, not trained—as nowadays they must be—and skill and nerve were needed for the management of a four-in-hand. Captain Chapman was the first in those parts to drive like Ericthonius, and it took him a very long time to get his father to sit behind him. For the roads were still very bad and perilous, and better suited for postilions, than for Stephen Chapman's team.

He durst not drive up Coombe Lorraine, or at any rate he feared the descent as yet, though he meant some day to venture it. And now that he was come upon his wooing, he left his gaudy equipage at the foot of the hill, to be sent back to Steyning and come for him at an appointed time. Then he and his father, with mutual grumblings, took to the steep ascent on foot.

Sir Roland had asked them, a few days ago,

to drive over and dine with him, either on Thursday, or any other day that might suit them. They came on the Thursday, with their minds made up to be satisfied with anything. But they certainly were not very well pleased to find that the fair Mistress Alice had managed to give them the slip entirely. She was always ready to meet Sir Remnant, and discharge the duties of a hostess to him; but, from some deep instinctive aversion, she could not even bear to sit at table with the Captain. She knew not at all what his character was; neither did Sir Roland know a tenth part of his ill repute; otherwise he had never allowed him to approach the maiden. He simply looked upon Captain Chapman as a fashionable man of the day, who might have been a little wild perhaps, but now meant to settle down in the country, and attend to his father's large estates.

However, neither of the guests suspected that their visit had fixed the date of another little visit pending long at Horsham; and one girl being as good as another to men of the world of that stamp, they were well content, when the haunch went out, to clink a glass with the Rector's daughters, instead of receiving a distant bow from a diffident and very shy young lady.

"Now, Lorraine," began Sir Remnant, after the ladies had left the room, and the Captain was gone out to look at something, according to arrangement, and had taken the Rector with him; "we have known one another a good many years; and I want a little sensible talk with you."

"Sir Remnant, I hope that our talk is always sensible; so far at least as can be expected on my part."

"There you are again, Lorraine, using some back meaning, such as no one else can enter into. But let that pass. It is your way. Now I want to say something to you."

"I also am smitten with a strong desire to know what it is, Sir Remnant."

"Well, it is neither more nor less than this. You know what dangerous times we live in, with every evil power let loose, and Satan, like a roaring lion, rampant and triumphant. Thank you, yes, I will take a pinch; your snuff is always so delicious. With the arch-enemy prowling about, with democracy, nonconformity, infidelity, and rick-burnings——"

"Exactly so. How well you express it! I was greatly struck with it in the *George and Dragon's* report of your speech at the farmer's dinner at Billinghurst."

"Well, well, I may have said it before; but that only makes it the more the truth. Can you deny it, Sir Roland Lorraine?"

"Far be it from me to deny the truth. I am listening with the greatest interest."

"No, you are not; you never do. You are always thinking of something to yourself. But what I was going to say was this, that it is high time to cement the union, and draw close the bonds of amity between all good men, all men of any principle—by which I mean—come now, you know."

"To be sure; you mean all stanch Tories."

"Yes, yes; all who hold by Church and State, land and the constitution. I have educated my son carefully in the only right and true principles. Train up a child—you know what I mean. And you, of course, have brought up your daughter upon the same right system."

"Nay, rather, I have left her to form her own political opinions. And to the best of my belief, she has formed none."

"Lorraine, I am heartily glad to hear it. That is how all the girls should be. When I was in London, they turned me sick with asking my opinion. The less they know, the better for them. Knowledge of anything makes a woman

scarcely fit to speak to. My poor dear wife could read and write, and that was quite enough for her. She did it on the jam-pots always, and she could spell most of it. Ah, she was a most wonderful woman!"

"She was. I often found much pleasure in her conversation. She knew so many things that never come by way of reading."

"And so does Stephen. You should hear him. He never reads any sort of book. Ah, that is the true learning. Books always make stupid people. Now it struck me that—ah, you know, I see. A wink's as good as a nod, of course. No catching a weasel asleep." Here Sir Remnant screwed up one eye, and gave Sir Roland a poke in the ribs, with the most waggish air imaginable.

"Again and again I assure you," said his host, "that I have not the smallest idea what you mean. Your theory about books has in me the most thorough confirmation."

"Aha! it is all very well—all very well to pretend, Lorraine. Another pinch of snuff, and that settles it. Let them set up their horses together as soon as ever they please—eh?"

"Who? What horses? Why will you thus visit me with impenetrable enigmas?"

"Visit you! Why, you invited me yourself! Who indeed? Why, of course, our lad Steenie, and your girl Lallie!"

"Captain Chapman and my Alice! Such a thought never entered my mind. Do you know that poor Alice is little more than seventeen years old? And Captain Chapman must be—let me see——"

"Never mind what he is. He is my son and heir, and there'll be fifty thousand to settle on his wife, in hard cash—not so bad nowadays."

"Sir Remnant Chapman, I beg you not to say another word on the subject. Your son must be twice my daughter's age, and he looks even more than that——"

"Dash my wig! Then I am seventy, I suppose. What the dickens have his looks got to do with the matter? I don't call him at all a bad-looking fellow. A chip of the old block, that's what he is. Ah, many a fine woman, I can tell you——"

"Now, if you please," Sir Roland said, with a very clear and determined voice—"if you please, we will drop this subject. Your son may be a very good match, and no doubt he is in external matters; and if Alice when old enough

should become attached to him, perhaps I might not oppose it. There is nothing more to be said at present; and, above all things, she must not hear of it."

"I see, I see," answered the other baronet, who was rather short of temper. "Missy must be kept to her bread and milk, and good books, and all that, a little longer. By the by, Lorraine, what was it I heard about your son the other day—that he had been making a fool of himself with some grocer's daughter?"

"I have not heard of any grocer's daughter. And as he will shortly leave England, people perhaps will have less to say about him. His commission is promised, as perhaps you know; and he is not likely to quit the army because there is fighting going on."

Sir Remnant felt all the sting of that hit; his face (which showed many signs of good living) flushed to the tint of the claret in his hand, and he was just about to make a very coarse reply, when luckily the Rector came back suddenly, followed by the valiant Captain. Sir Roland knew that he had allowed himself to be goaded into bad manners for once, and he strove to make up for it by unwonted attention to the warrior.

CHAPTER V.

IN A MARCHING REGIMENT.

It was true that Hilary had attained at last the great ambition of his life. He had changed the pen for the sword, the sand for powder, and the ink for blood; and in a few days he would be afloat, on his way to join Lord Wellington. His father's obstinate objections had at last been overcome; for there seemed to be no other way to cut the soft net of enchantment and throw him into a sterner world.

His Uncle Struan had done his best, and tried to the utmost stretch the patience of Sir Roland, with countless words, until the latter exclaimed at last, "Why, you seem to be worse than the boy himself! You went to spy out the nakedness of the land, and you returned in a fortnight with grapes of Eschol. Truly this Danish Lovejoy is more potent than the great Canute. He turns at his pleasure the tide of opinion."

"Roland, now you go too far. It is not the Grower that I indite of, but his charming daughter. If you could but once be persuaded to see her——"

"Of course. Exactly what Hilary said. In him I could laugh at it; but in you—— Well, a great philosopher tells us that every jot of opinion (even that of a babe, I suppose) is to be regarded as an equal item of the 'universal consensus.' And the universal consensus becomes, or forms, or fructifies, or solidifies, into the great homogeneous truth. I may not quote him aright, and I beg his pardon for so lamely rendering him. However, that is a rude sketch of his view, a brick from his house—to mix metaphors—and perhaps you remember it better, Struan."

"God forbid! The only thing that I remember out of all my education is the stories—what do you call them?—mythologies. Capital some of them are, capital! Ah, they do so much good to boys—teach them manliness and self-respect!"

"Do they? However, to return to this lovely daughter of the Kentish Alcinous—by the way, if his ancestors were Danes who took to gardening, it suggests a rather startling

analogy. The old Corycian is believed (though without a particle of evidence) to have been a pirate in early life, and therefore have taken to pot-herbs. Let that pass. I could never have believed it, except for this instance of Lovejoy."

"And how, if you please," broke in the Rector, who was always jealous of "Norman blood," because he had never heard that he had any; "how were the Normans less piratical, if you please, than the Danes, their own grandfathers? Except that they were sick at sea—big rogues all of them, in my opinion. The Saxons were the only honest fellows. Ay, and they would have thrashed those Normans, but for the leastest little accident. When I hear of those Normans, without any shoulders—don't tell me; they never would have built such a house as this is, otherwise—what do you think I feel ready to do, sir? Why, to get up, and to lift my coat, and——"

"Come, come, Struan; we quite understand all your emotions without that. This makes you a very bigoted ambassador in our case. You meant to bring back all the truth, of course. But when you found the fishing good, and the people roughly hospitable, and above all, a Danish smack in their manners, and figures,

and even their eyes, which have turned on the Kentish soil, I am told, to a deep and very brilliant brown——"

"Yes, Roland, you are right for once. At any rate, it is so with her."

"Very well. Then you being, as you always are, a sudden man—what did you do but fall in love (in an elderly fatherly manner, of course) with this—what is her name, now again? I never can recollect it."

"You do. You never forget anything. Her name is 'Mabel.' And you may be glad to pronounce it pretty often, in your old age, Sir Roland."

"Well, it is a pretty name, and deserves a pretty bearer. But, Struan, you are a man of the world. You know what Hilary is; and you know (though we do not give ourselves airs, and drive four horses in a hideous yellow coach, and wear diamond rings worth a thousand pounds), you know what the Lorraines have always been—a little particular in their ways, and a little inclined to, to, perhaps——"

"To look down on the rest of the world, without ever letting them know it, or even knowing it yourselves, perhaps. Have I hit it aright, Sir Roland?"

"Not quite that. Indeed, nothing could be further from what I was thinking of." Sir Roland Lorraine sighed gently here, and even his brother-in-law had not the least idea why he did so. It was that Sir Roland, like all the more able Lorraines for several centuries, was at heart a fatalist. And this family taint had perhaps been deepened by the infusion of Eastern blood. This was the bar so often fixed between them and the rest of the world—a barrier which must hold good, while every man cares for his neighbour's soul, so much more than his own for ever.

"Is it anything in religion, Roland?" the Rector whispered kindly. "I know that you are not orthodox, and a good deal puffed up with carnal knowledge. Still, if it is in my line at all; I am not a very high authority—but perhaps I might lift you over it. They are saying all sorts of things now in the world; and I have taken two hours a-day, several days—now you need not laugh—in a library we have got up at Horsham, filled with the best divinity; so as to know how to answer them."

"My dear Struan," Sir Roland replied, without so much as the gleam of a smile, "that was really good of you. And you now have so

many other things to attend to with young dogs and that; and the 1st of September next week, I believe! What a relief that must be to you!"

"Ay, that it is. You cannot imagine, of course, with all your many ways of frittering time away indoors, what a wearing thing it is to have nothing better than rabbit-shooting, or teaching a dog to drop to shot. But now about Hilary: you must relent—indeed you must, dear Roland. He is living on sixpence a-day, I believe—virtuous fellow, most rare young man! Why, if that dirty Steve Chapman now had been treated as you have served Hilary—note of hand, bill-drawing, post-obits,—and you might even think yourself lucky if there were no big forgery to hush up. Ah, his father may think what he likes; but I look on Hilary as a perfect wonder, a Bayard, a Crichton, a pelican!"

"Surely you mean a paragon, Struan? What young can he have to feed from his own breast?"

"I meant what I said, as I always do. And how can you know what young he has, when you never even let him come near you? Ah, if I only had such a son?" Here the Rector, who

really did complain that he had no son to teach how to shoot, managed to get his eyes a little touched with genial moisture.

"This is grievous," Sir Roland answered; "and a little more than I ever expected, or can have enabled myself to deserve. Now, Struan, will you cease from wailing, if I promise one thing?"

"That must depend upon what it is. It will take a good many things, I am afraid, to make me think well of you again."

"To hear such a thing from the head of the parish! Now, Struan, be not vindictive. I ought to have let you get a good day's shooting, and then your terms would have been easier."

"Well, Roland, you know that we can do nothing. The estates are tied up in such a wonderful way, by some lawyer's trick or other, through a whim of that blessed old lady—she can't hear me, can she?—that Hilary has his own sister's life between him and the inheritance; so far as any of us can make out."

"So that you need not have boasted," answered Sir Roland, with a quiet smile, "about his being a Bayard, in refraining from post-obits."

"Well, well; you know what I meant quite well. The Jews are not yet banished from England. And there is reason to fear they never will be. There are plenty of them to discount his chance; if he did what many other boys would do."

Sir Roland felt the truth of this. And he feared in his heart that he might be pushing his only son a little too hard, in reliance upon his honour.

"Will you come to the point for once?" he asked, with a look of despair and a voice of the same. "This is my offer—to get Hilary a commission in a foot-regiment, pack him off to the war in Spain; and if in three years after that he sticks to that Danish Nausicaa, and I am alive—why, then, he shall have her."

Mr. Hales threw back his head—for he had a large, deep head, and when it wanted to think it would go back—and then he answered warily:

"It is a very poor offer, Sir Roland. At first sight it seems fair enough. But you, with your knowledge of youth, and especially such a youth as Hilary, rely upon the effects of absence, change, adventures, dangers, Spanish beauties, and, worst of all, wider knowledge of

the world, and the company of coarse young men, to make him jilt his love, or perhaps take even a worse course than that."

"You are wrong" said Sir Roland, with much contempt. "Sir Remnant Chapman might so have meant it. Struan, you ought to know me better. But I think that I have a right, at least, to try the substance of such a whim, before I yield to it, and install, as the future mistress, a—well, what do you want me to call her, Struan?"

"Let it be, Roland; let it be. I am a fair man, if you are not; and I can make every allowance for you. But I think that your heir should at least be entitled to swing his legs over a horse, Sir Roland."

"I, on the other hand, think that it would be his final ruin to do so. He would get among reckless fellows, to whom he is already too much akin. It has happened so with several of my truly respected ancestors. They have gone into cavalry regiments, and ridden full gallop through their estates. I am not a penurious man, as you know; and few think less of money. Can you deny that, even in your vitiated state of mind?"

"I cannot deny it," the Rector answered;

"you never think twice about money, Roland—except, of course, when you are bound to do so."

"Very well; then you can believe that I wish poor Hilary to start afoot, solely for his own benefit. There is very hard fighting just now in Spain, or on the confines of Portugal. I hate all fighting, as you are aware. Still it is a thing that must be done."

"Good Lord!" cried the Rector, "how you do talk! As if it was so many partridges!"

"No, it is better than that—come, Struan—because the partridges carry no guns, you know."

"I should be confoundedly sorry if they did," the Rector answered, with a shudder. "Fancy letting fly at a bird who might have a long barrel under his tail!"

"It is an appalling imagination. Struan, I give you credit for it. But here we are, as usual, wandering from the matter which we have in hand. Are you content, or are you not, with what I propose about Hilary?"

In this expressly alternative form, there lurks a great deal of vigour. If a man says, "Are you satisfied?" you begin to cast about and wonder, whether you might not win better

terms. Many side-issues come in, and disturb you; and your way to say "yes" looks too positive. But if he only clench his inquiry with the option of the strong negative, the weakest of all things, human nature that hates to say "no," is tampered with. This being so, Uncle Struan thought for a moment or so; and then said, "Yes, I am."

CHAPTER VI.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPINION.

Is it just or even honest—fair, of course, it cannot be—to deal so much with the heavy people, the eldermost ones and the bittermost, and leave altogether with nothing said of her—or not even let her have her own say—as sweet a young maiden as ever lived, and as true, and brave, and kind an one? Alice was of a different class altogether from Mabel Lovejoy. Mabel was a dear-hearted girl, loving, pure, unselfish, warm, and good enough to marry any man, and be his own wife for ever.

But Alice went far beyond all that. Her nature was cast in a different mould. She had not only the depth—which is the common property of women—but she also had the height of loving. Such as a mother has for her children; rather than a wife towards her husband. And yet by no means an imperious

or exacting affection, but tender, submissive, and delicate. Inasmuch as her brother stood next to her father, or in some points quite on a level with him, in her true regard and love, it was not possible that her kind heart could escape many pangs of late. In the first place, no loving sister is likely to be altogether elated by the discovery that her only brother has found some one who shall be henceforth more to him than herself is. Alice, moreover, had a very strong sense of the rank and dignity of the Lorraines; and disliked, even more than her father did, the importation of this "vegetable product," as she rather facetiously called poor Mabel, into their castle of lineage. But now, when Hilary was going away, to be drowned on the voyage perhaps, or at least to be shot, or sabred, or ridden over by those who had horses—while he had none—or even if he escaped all that, to be starved, or frozen, or sunstruck, for the sake of his country—as our best men are, while their children survive to starve afterwards—it came upon Alice as a heavy blow that she never might happen to see him again. Although her father had tried to keep her from the excitement of the times, and the gasp of the public for dreadful news

(a gasp which is deeper and wider always, the longer the time of waiting is), still there were too many mouths of rumour for truth to stop one in ten of them. Although the old butler turned his cuffs up—to show what an arm he still possessed—and grumbled that all this was nothing, and a bladder of wind in comparison with what he had known forty years agone; and though Mrs. Pipkins, the housekeeper, quite agreed with him and went further; neither was the cook at all disposed to overdo the thing; it was of no service—they could not stay the torrent of public opinion.

Trotman had been taken on, raslily (as may have been said before), as upper footman in lieu of the old-established and trusty gentleman, who had been compelled by fierce injustice to retire, and take to a public-house—with a hundred pounds to begin upon—being reft of the office of footman for no other reason that he could hear of, except that he was apt to be, towards nightfall, not quite able to "keep his feet."

To him succeeded the headlong Trotman; and one of the very first things he did was—as declared a long time ago, with deep sympathy, in this unvarnished tale—to kick poor Bonny,

like a hopping spider, from the brow of the hill to the base thereof.

Trotman may have had good motives for this rather forcible movement: and it is not our place to condemn him. Still, in more than one quarter it was believed that he acted thus, through no zeal whatever for virtue or justice; but only because he so loved his perquisites, and suspected that Bonny got smell of them. And the butler quite confirmed this view, and was much surprised at Trotman's conduct; for Bonny was accustomed to laugh at his jokes, and had even sold some of his bottles for him.

In such a crisis, scarcely any one would regard such a trivial matter. And yet none of us ought to kick anybody, without knowing what it may lead to. Violence is to be deprecated: for it has to be paid for beyond its value, in twelve cases out of every dozen. And so it was now; for, if Coombe Lorraine had been before this, as Mrs. Pipkins declared (having learned French from her cookery-book), "the most Triestest place in the world," it became even duller now that Bonny was induced, by personal considerations, to terminate rather abruptly his overtures to the kitchen-maid. For who brought the tidings of all great

events and royal proceedings? Our Bonny. Who knew the young man of every housemaid in the vales of both Adur and Arun? Our Bonny. Who could be trusted to carry a scroll (or in purer truth perhaps, a scrawl) that should be treasured through the love-lorn hours of waiting—at table—in a zebra waistcoat? Solely and emphatically Bonny!

Therefore every tender domestic bosom rejoiced when the heartless Trotman was compelled to tread the track of his violence, lamely and painfully, twice every week, to fetch from Steyning his *George and the Dragon*, which used to be delivered by Bonny. Mr. Trotman, however, was a generous man, and always ready to share, as well as enjoy, the delights of literature. Nothing pleased him better than to sit on the end of a table among the household ladies and gentlemen, with Mrs. Pipkins in the chair of honour, and interpret from his beloved journal, the chronicles of the county, the country, and the Continent.

"Why, ho!" he shouted out one day, "what's this? Can I believe my heyes? Our Halary going to the wars next week!"

"No, now!" "Never can be!" "Most shameful!" some of his audience exclaimed.

But Mrs. Pipkins and the old butler shook their heads at one another, as much as to say, "I knowed it."

"Mr. Trotman," said the senior housemaid, who entertained connubial views; "you are sure to be right in all you reads. You are such a bootiful scholard! Will you obleege us by reading it out?"

"Hem! hem! Ladies all, it is yours to command, it is mine to obey. 'The insatiable despot who sways the Continent seems resolved to sacrifice to his baleful lust of empire all the best and purest and noblest of the blood of Britain. It was only last week that we had to mourn the loss sustained by all Sussex in the most promising scion of a noble house. And now we have it on the best authority that Mr. H. L., the only son of the well-known and widely-respected baronet residing not fifty miles from Steyning, has received orders to join his regiment at the seat of war, under Lord Wellington. The gallant young gentleman sails next week from Portsmouth in the troop-ship Sandylegs'—or some such blessed Indian name!"

"The old scrimp!" exclaimed the cook, a warm ally to poor Hilary. "To send him out

in a nasty sandy ship, when his birth were to go on horseback, the same as all the gentlefolks do to the wars!"

"But Mrs. Merryjack, you forget," explained the accomplished Trotman, "that Great Britain is a hisland, ma'am. And no one can't ride from a hisland on horseback; at least it was so when I was a boy."

"Then it must be so now, John Trotman; for what but a boy are you now, I should like to know? And a bad-mannered boy, in my humble opinion, to want to teach his helders their duty. I know that I lives in a hisland, of course, the same as all the Scotchmen does, and goes round the sun like a joint on a spit; and so does nearly all of us. But perhaps John Trotman doesn't."

With this "withering sarcasm," the lady-cook turned away from poor Trotman, and then delivered these memorable words—

"Sir Rowland will repent too late. Sir Rowland will shed the briny tear, the same as might any one of us, even on £3 a-year, for sending his only son out in a ship, when he ought to a' sent 'un on horseback."

Mrs. Pipkins nodded assent, and so did the ancient butler; and Trotman felt that public

opinion was wholly against him, until such time as it should be further educated.

But such a discussion had been aroused, that there was no chance of its stopping here; and Alice, who loved to collect opinions, had many laid before her. She listened to all judiciously, and pretended to do it judicially; and after that she wondered whether she had done what she ought to do. For she knew that she was only very young, with nobody to advise her; and the crushing weight of the world upon her, if she tripped or forgot herself. Most girls of her age would have been at school, and taken childish peeps at the world, and burnished up their selfishness by conflict with one another; but Sir Roland had kept to the family custom, and taught and trained his daughter at home, believing as he did that young women lose some of their best and most charming qualities by what he called "gregarious education." Alice therefore had been under care of a good and well-taught governess—for "masters" at that time were proper to boys—until her mind was quite up to the mark, and capable of taking care of itself. For, in those days, it was not needful for any girl to know a great deal more than was good for her.

Early one September evening, when the day and year hung calmly in the balance of the sun; when sensitive plants and clever beasts were beginning to look around them, and much of the growth of the ground was ready to regret lost opportunities; when the comet was gone for good at last, and the earth was beginning to laugh at her terror (having found him now clearly afraid of her), and when a sense of great deliverance from the power of drought and heat throbbed in the breast of dewy nurture, so that all took breath again, and even man (the last of all things to be pleased or thankful) was ready to acknowledge that there might have been worse moments,—at such a time fair Alice sat in her garden thinking of Hilary. The work of the summer was over now, and the fate of the flowers pronounced and settled, for better or worse, till another year; no frost, however, had touched them yet, while the heavy dews of autumnal night, and the brisk air flowing from the open downs, had gladdened, refreshed, and sweetened them. Among them, and between the shrubs, there spread and sloped a pleasant lawn for all who love soft sward and silence, and the soothing sound of leaves. From the form of the ground and bend of the hills, as

well as the northerly aspect, a peculiar cast and tingle of the air might be found, at different moments, fluctuating differently. Most of all, in a fine sunset of autumn (though now the sun was behind the ridge), from the fulness of the upper sky such gleam and glance fell here and there, that nothing could be sure of looking as it looked only a minute ago. At such times all the glen seemed thrilling like one vast lute of trees and air, drawing fingered light along the chords of trembling shadow. At such a time, no southern slope could be compared with this, for depth of beauty and impressive power, for the charm of clear obscurity and suggestive murmuring mystery. A time and scene that might recall the large romance of grander ages; where wandering lovers might shrink and think of lovers whose love was over; and even the sere man of the world might take a fresh breath of the boyish days when fear was a pleasant element.

Suddenly Alice became aware of something moving near her; and almost before she had time to be frightened, Hilary leaped from behind a laurel. He caught her in his arms, and kissed her, and then stepped back to leave plenty of room for contemplative admiration.

"I was resolved to have one more look. We sail to-morrow, they are in such a hurry. I have walked all the way from Portsmouth. At least I got a little lift on the road, on the top of a waggon-load of wheat."

"How wonderfully good of you, Hilary dear!" she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, and yet a strong inclination to smile, as she watched him. "How tired you must be! Why, when did you leave the dépôt? I thought they kept you at perpetual drill."

"So they did. But I soon got up to all that. I can do it as well as the best of them now. What a provoking child you are! Well, don't you notice anything?"

For Alice, with true sisterly feeling, was trying his endurance to the utmost, dissembling all her admiration of his fine fresh "uniform." Of course, this was not quite so grand as if he had been (as he had right to be) enrolled as an "*eques auratus*;" still it looked very handsome on his fine straight figure, and set off the brightness of his clear complexion. Moreover, his two months of drilling at the dépôt had given to his active and well-poised form that vigorous firmness which alone was needed to make it perfect. With the quickness of a girl, his sister

saw all this in a moment; and yet, for fear of crying, she laughed at him.

"Why, how did you come so 'spick and span?' Have you got a sheaf of wheat inside your waistcoat? It was too cruel to put such clothes on the top of a harvest-waggon. I wonder you did not set it all on fire."

"Much you know about it!" exclaimed the young soldier, with vast chagrin. "You don't deserve to see anything. I brought my togs in a haversack, and put them on in your bower here, simply to oblige you; and you don't think they are worth looking at!"

"I am looking with all my might; and yet I cannot see anything of a sword. I suppose they won't allow you one yet. But surely you must have a sword in the end."

"Alice, you are enough to wear one out. Could I carry my sword in a haversack? However, if you don't think I look well, somebody else does—that is one comfort."

"You do not mean, I hope," replied Alice, missing his allusion carefully, "to go back to your ship without coming to see papa, dear Hilary?"

"That is exactly what I do mean; and that is why I have watched for you so. I have no intention of knocking under. And so he will

find out in the end; and somebody else, I hope, as well. Everybody thinks I am such a fool, because I am easy-tempered. Let them wait a bit. They may be proud of that never-do-well, silly Hilary yet. In the last few months, I can assure you, I have been through things — however, I won't talk about them. They never did understand me at home; and I suppose they never will. But it does not matter. Wait a bit."

"Darling Hilary! don't talk so. It makes me ready to cry to hear you. You will go into some battle, and throw your life away, to spite all of us."

"No, no, I won't. Though it would serve you right for considering me such a nincompoop. As if the best, and sweetest, and truest-hearted girl in the universe was below contempt, because her father happens to grow cabbages! What do we grow? Corn, and hay, and sting-nettles, and couch-grass. Or at least our tenants grow them for us, and so we get the money. Well, how are they finer than cabbages?"

"Come in and see father," said Alice, straining her self-control to shun argument. "Do come, and see him before you go."

"I will not," he answered, amazing his sister by his new-born persistency. "He never has asked me; and I will not do it."

No tears, no sobs, or coaxings moved him; his troubles had given him strength of will; and he went to the war without seeing his father.

CHAPTER VII.

RAGS AND BONES.

One man there is, or was, who ought to have been brought forward long ago. Everybody said the same thing of him—he wanted nothing more than the power of insisting upon his reputation, and of checking his own bashfulness, to make him one of the foremost men anywhere in or near Steyning. His name was Bottler, as everybody knew; and through some hereditary veins of thought, they always added "the pigman"—as if he were a porcine hybrid!

He was nothing of the sort. He was only a man who stuck pigs, when they wanted sticking; and if at such times he showed humanity, how could that identify him with the animal between his knees? He was sensitive upon this point at times, and had been known to say, "I am no pigman; what I am is a master pork-butcher."

However, he could not get over his name, any more than anybody else can. And if such a trifle hurt his feelings, he scarcely insisted upon them, until he was getting quite into his fifth quart of ale, and discovering his true value.

A writer of the first eminence, who used to be called "Tully," but now is euphoniously cited as "Kikero," has taught us that to neglect the world's opinion of one's self is a proof not only of an arrogant, but even of a dissolute mind. Bottler could prove himself not of an arrogant, and still less of a dissolute mind; he respected the opinion of the world; and he showed his respect in the most convincing and flattering manner, by his style of dress. He never wore slops, or an apron even, unless it were at the decease or during the obsequies of a porker. He made it a point of honour to maintain an unbroken succession of legitimate white stockings—a problem of deep and insatiable anxiety to every woman in Steyning town. In the first place, why did he wear them? It took several years to determine this point; but at last it was known, amid universal applause, that he wore them in memory of his first love. But then there arose a far more difficult and excruciating question—

how did he do it? Had he fifty pairs? Did he wash them himself, or did he make his wife? How could he kill pigs and keep his stockings perpetually unsullied? Emphatically and despairingly,—why had they never got a hole in them?

He, however, with an even mind, trod the checkered path of life, with fustian breeches and white stockings. His coat was of West of England broadcloth, and of a rich imperial blue, except where the colour had yielded to time; and all his buttons were of burnished brass. His honest countenance was embellished with a fine candid smile, whenever he spoke of the price of pigs or pork; and no one had ever known him to tell a lie—or at any rate he said so.

This good and remarkable man was open to public inspection every morning in his shop, from eight to twelve o'clock. He then retired to his dinner, and customers might thump and thump with a key or knife, or even his own steel, on the counter, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Bottler would condescend to turn round for them. Nothing less than the chink of a guinea would stir them at this sacred time. But if any one had a guinea to rattle on the board, and

did it cleverly, the blind across the glass door was drawn back on its tape, and out peeped Bottler.

When dinner and subsequent facts had been dealt with, this eminent pigman horsed his cart, hoisted his favourite child in over the foot-board, and set forth in quest of pigs, or as he put it more elegantly, "hanimals german to his profession." That favourite child, his daughter Polly, being of breadth and length almost equal, and gifted with "bow-legs" (as the public had ample means of ascertaining), was now about four years old, and possessed of remarkable gravity even for that age. She would stand by the hour between her father's knees, while he guided the shambling horse, and gaze most intently at nothing at all; as if it were the first time she ever had enjoyed the privilege of inspecting it.

Rags and bones (being typical of the beginning and end of humanity) have an inner meaning of their own, and stimulate all who deal in them. At least it often seems to be so, though one must not be too sure of it. Years of observation lead us to begin to ask how to observe a little.

Bonny had not waited for this perversity of

certainty. He had long been taking observations of Polly Bottler—as he could get them—and the more he saw her, the more his finest feelings were drawn forth by her, and the way she stood between her father's legs. Some boys have been known to keep one virtue so enlarged and fattened up, like the liver of a Strasburg goose, that the flavour of it has been enough to abide—if they died before dissolution—in the rue of pious memory.

Exactly so it was with that Bonny. He never feigned to be an honest boy, because it would have been dishonest of him; besides that, he did not know how to do it, and had his own reasons for waiting a bit; yet nothing short of downright starvation could have driven him at any time to steal so much as one pig's trotter from his patron's cart, or shop, or yard. Now this deserves mention, because it proves that there does, or at any rate did, exist a discoverable specimen of a virtue so rare, that its existence escaped all suspicion till after the classic period of the Latin tongue.

A grateful soul, or a grateful spirit—we have no word to express "animus," though we often express it towards one another—such was the Roman form for this virtue, as a concrete

rarity. And a couple of thousand years have made it two thousand times more obsolete.

In one little breast it still abode, purely original and native, and growing underneath the soil, shy of light and hard to find, like the truffle of the South Downs. Bonny was called, in one breath every day, a shameful and a shameless boy; and he may have deserved but a middling estimate from a lofty point of view. It must be admitted that he slipped sometimes over the border of right and wrong, when a duck or a rabbit, or a green goose haply, hopped or waddled on the other side of it, in the tempting twilight. But even that he avoided doing, until halfpence were scarce and the weather hungry.

Now being, as has been said before, of distinguished countenance and costume, he already had made a tender impression upon the heart of Polly Bottler; and when she had been very good and conquered the alphabet up to P the pig—at which point professional feeling always overcame the whole family—the reward of merit selected by herself would sometimes be a little visit to Bonny, as the cart came back from Findon. There is room for suspicion, however, that true love may not have been the

only motive power, or at least that poor Bonny had a very formidable rival in Jack the donkey; inasmuch as the young lady always demanded, as the first-fruit of hospitality, a prolonged caracole on that quadruped, which she always performed in cavalier fashion, whereto the formation of her lower members afforded especial facility.

Now one afternoon towards Allhallows day, when the air was brisk and the crisp leaves rustled, some under foot and some overhead, Mr. Bottler, upon his return from Storrington, with four pretty porkers in under his net, received from his taciturn daughter that push on his right knee, whose import he well understood. It meant—"We are going to see Bonny to-day. You must turn on this side, and go over the fields."

"All right, little un," the pigman answered, with his never-failing smile. "Daddy knows as well as you do a'most; though you can't expect him to come up to you."

Polly gave a nod, which was as much as any one ever expected of her all the time she was out of doors. At home she could talk any number to the dozen, when the mood was on her; but directly she got into the open air, the

size of the world was too much for her. All she could do was to stand, and wonder, and have the whole of it going through her, without her feeling anything.

After much jolting, and rattling, and squeaking of pigs at the roughness of sod or fallow, they won to the entrance of Coombe Lorraine, and the hermitage of Bonny. That exemplary boy had been all day pursuing his calling with his usual diligence, and was very busy now, blowing up his fire to have some hot savoury stew to warm him. All his beggings and his buyings, &c., were cast in together; and none but the cook and consumer could tell how marvellously they always managed to agree among themselves, and with him. A sharp little turn of air had set in, and made every rover of the land sharp set; and the lid of the pot was beginning to lift charily and preciously, when the stubble and bramble crackled much. Bonny ensconced in his kitchen corner, on the right hand outside his main entrance, kept stirring the fire, and warming his hands, and indulging in a preliminary smell. Bearing ever in mind the stern duty of promoting liberal sentiments, he had felt while passing an old woman's garden, how thoroughly welcome he ought to

be to a few sprigs of basil, a handful of onions, and a pinch of lemon-thyme; and how much more polite it was to dispense with the frigid ceremony of asking.

As the cart rattled up in the teeth of the wind, Polly Bottler began to expand her frank ingenuous nostrils; inhaled the breeze, and thus spake with her mouth—

"Dad, I'se yerry hungy."

"No wonder," replied the paternal voice; "what a boy, to be sure, that is to cook! At his time of life, just to taste his stoos! He've got a born knowledge what to put in—ay, and what to keep out; and how long to do it. He deserveth that pot as I gived him out of the bilin' house; now dothn't he? If moother worn't looking for us to home, with chittlings and fried taties, I'd as lief sit down and sup with him. He maketh me in the humour, that he doth."

As soon as he beheld his visitors, Bonny advanced in a graceful manner, as if his supper was of no account. He had long been aware, from the comments of boys at Steyning (who were hostile to him), that his chimney-pot hat was not altogether in strict accord with his character. This had mortified him as deeply as

his lightsome heart could feel; because he had trusted to that hat, to achieve his restoration into the bosom of society. The words of the incumbent of his parish (ere ever the latter began to thrash him) had sunk into his inner and deeper consciousness and conscience; and therein had stirred up a nascent longing to have something to say to somebody whose fore-legs were not employed for locomotion any longer.

Alas, that ghost of a definition has no leg to stand upon! No two great authorities (perfect as they are, and complete in their own system) can agree with one another concerning the order of a horse's feet, in walking, ambling, or trotting, or even standing on all fours in stable. The walk of a true-born Briton is surely almost as important a question. Which arm does he swing to keep time with which leg; and bends he his elbows in time with his knees; and do all four occupy the air, or the ground, or himself, in a regulated sequence; and if so, what aberration must ensue from the use of a walking-stick? CEdipus, who knew all about feet (from the tenderness of his own soles), could scarcely be sure of all this, before the time of the close of the market.

This is far too important a question to be

treated hastily. Only, while one is about it, let Bonny's hat be settled for. Wherever he thought to have made an impression with this really guinea-hat, ridicule and execration followed on his naked heels; till he sold it at last for tenpence-halfpenny, and came back to his naked head. Society is not to be carried by storm even with a picked-up hat.

Jack, the donkey, was always delighted to have Polly Bottler upon his back. Not perhaps from any vaticination of his future mistress, but because she was sure to reward him with a cake, or an apple, or something good; so that when he felt her sturdy little legs, both hands in his mane, and the heels begin to drum, he would prick his long ears, and toss his fine white nose, and would even have arched his neck, if nature had not strictly forbidden him. On the present occasion, however, Polly did not very long witch the world with noble donkeymanship; although Mr. Bottler sat patiently in his cart, smiling as if he could never kill a pig, and with paternal pride stamped on every wrinkle of his nose; while the brief-lived porkers poked their snouts through the net, and watched with little sharp hairy eyes the very last drama perhaps in which they would

be spectators only. The lively creatures did not suspect that Bonny's fire, the night after next, would be cooking some of their vital parts, with a truly fine smell of sausages.

Sausages were too dear for Bonny; as even the pigs at a glance were aware; but he earned three quarters of a pound for nothing, by noble hospitality. To wit, his angel of a Polly had not made more than three or four parades, while he (with his head scarcely reaching up to the mark at the back of the donkey's ears, where the perspiration powdered) shouted, and holloaed, and made-believe to be very big—as boys must do, for practice towards their manhood—when by some concurrent goodwill of air and fire, and finer elements, the pot-lid arose, to let out a bubble of goodness returning to its native heaven; and the volatile virtue gently hovered to leave a fair memory behind.

The merest corner of this fragrance flipped into Polly Bottler's nose, as a weaker emanation had done, even before she began her ride. And this time her mouth and her voice expressed cessation of hesitation.

"'Et me down, 'et me down," she cried, stretching her fat short arms to Bonny; "I 'ants some; I'se so hungy."

"Stop a bit, miss," said Bonny, as being the pink of politeness to all the fair: "there, your purty little toes is on the blessed ground again. Stop a bit, miss, while I runs into my house, for to get the spoon."

For up to this time he had stirred his soup with a forked stick made of dogwood, which helps to flavour everything; but now as a host, he was bound to show his more refined resources. Polly, however, was so rapt out of her usual immobility, that she actually toddled into Bonny's house to make him be quick about the spoon. He, in amazement, turned round and stared, to be sure of his eyes that such a thing could ever have happened to him. The jealousy of the collector strove with the hospitality of the householder and the chivalry of the rover. But the finer feelings conquered, and he showed her round the corner. Mr. Bottler, who could not get in, cracked his whip and whistled at them.

Polly, with great eyes of wonder and fright at her own daring, longed with one breath to go on, and with the next to run back again. But the boy caught hold of her hand, and she stuck to him through the ins and outs of light, until there was something well worth seeing.

What is the sweetest thing in life? Hope, love, gold, fame, pride, revenge, danger—or anything else, according to the nature of the liver. But with those who own very little, and have "come across" all that little, with risk and much uncertainty, the sweetest thing in life is likely to be the sense of ownership. The mightiest hoarder of gold and silver, Crœsus, Rhampsinitus, or Solomon, never thought half so much of his stores, or at any rate, never enjoyed them as much as this rag-and-bone collector his. When he came to his room he held his breath, and watched with the greatest anxiety for corresponding emotion of Polly.

The room was perhaps about twelve feet long, and eight feet wide at its utmost, scooped from the chalk without any sharp corners, but with a grand contempt of shape. The floor went up and down, and so did the roof, according to circumstances; the floor appearing inclined to rise, and the roof to come down if called upon. Much excellent rubbish was here to be found; but the window was the first thing to seize and hold any stranger's attention. It must have been built either by or for the old hermit who once had dwelt there; at any rate no one could have designed it without a

quaint ingenuity. It was cut through a three-foot wall of chalk, the embrasure being about five feet in span, and three feet deep at the crown of the arch. In the middle, a narrow pier of chalk was left to keep the arch up, and the lights on either side were made of horn, stained glass, and pig's bladder. The last were of Bonny's handiwork, to keep out the wind when it blew too cold among the flaws of ages. And now as the evening light fetched round the foot of the hills, and gathered strongly into this western aspect, the richness of colours was such that even Polly's steadfast eyes were dazed.

Without vouchsafing so much as a glance at Bonny's hoarded glories, the child ran across the narrow chamber, and spread out her hands and opened her mouth wider even than her eyes, at the tints now streaming in on her. The glass had been brought perhaps from some ruined chapel of the hillside, and glowed with a depth of colour infused by centuries of sunset; not one pane of regular shape was to be found among them; but all, like veins of marble, ran with sweetest harmony of hue, to meet the horn and the pig's bladder. From the outside it looked like a dusty slate traversed with bits

of a crusted bottle; it required to be seen from the inside, like an ancient master's painting.

Polly, like the rest of those few children who do not overtalk themselves, spent much of her time in observation, storing the entries inwardly. And young as she was, there might be perhaps a doubt entertained by those who knew her whether she were not of a deeper and more solid cast of mind than Bonny. Her father at any rate declared, and her mother was of the same opinion, that by the time she was ten years old she would buy and sell all Steyning. However, they may have thought this because all their other children were so stupid.

Now, be they right or be they wrong—as may be shown hereafter—Polly possessed at least the first and most essential of all the many endowments needful to approach success. Polly Bottler stuck to her point. And now, even with those fine old colours, like a century of rainbows, puzzling her, Polly remembered the stew in the pot, and pointed with her finger to the window-ledge where something shone in a rich blue light.

"Here's a 'poon, Bonny!" she exclaimed; "here's a 'poon! 'Et me have it, Bonny."

"No, that's not a spoon, miss; and I can't

make out for the life of me whatever it can be. I've a seed a many queer things, but I never seed the likes of that afore. Ah, take care, miss, or you'll cut your fingers!"

For Polly, with a most resolute air, had scrambled to the top of an old brown jar (the salvage from some shipwreck) which stood beneath the window-sill, and thence with a gallant sprawl she reached and clutched the shining implement which she wanted to eat her stew with. The boy was surprised to see her lift it with her fat brown fingers, and hold it tightly without being cut or stung, as he expected. For he had a wholesome fear of this thing, and had set it up as a kind of fetish, his mind (like every other) requiring something to bow down to. For the manner of his finding it first, and then its presentment in the mouth of Jack, added to the interest which its unknown meaning won for it.

With a laugh of triumph, the bow-legged maiden descended from her dangerous height, and paying no heed to all Bonny's treasures, waddled away with her new toy, either to show it to her father, or to plunge it into the stewpot perhaps. But her careful host, with an iron spoon and a saucer in his hands, ran after her,

and gently guided her to the crock, whither also Mr. Bottler sped. This was as it should be; and they found it so. For when the boy Bonny, with a hospitable sweep, lifted the cover of his cookery, a sense of that void which all nature protests against rose in the forefront of all three, and forbade them to seek any further. Bottler himself, in the stress of the moment, let the distant vision fade — of fried potatoes and combed chittlings — and lapsed into that lowest treason to Lares and Penates—a supper abroad, when the supper at home is salted, and peppered, and browning.

But though Polly opened her mouth so wide, and smacked her lips, and made every other gratifying demonstration, not for one moment would she cede possession of the treasure she had found in Bonny's window. Even while most absorbed in absorbing, she nursed it jealously on her lap; and even when her father had lit his pipe from Bonny's bonfire, and was ready to hoist her in again over the footboard, the child stuck fast to her new delight, and set up a sturdy yell when the owner came to reclaim it from her.

"Now don't 'ee, don't 'ee, that's a dear," began the gentle pork-butcher, as the pigs in

the cart caught up the strain, and echo had enough to do; for Polly of course redoubled her wailings, as all little dears must, when coaxed to stop; "here, Bonny, here lad, I'll gie thee sixpence for un, though her ain't worth a penny, I doubt. And thou may'st call to-morrow, and the Misses 'll gie thee a clot of sassages."

Bonny looked longingly at his fetish; but gratitude and true love got the better of veneration. Polly, moreover, might well be trusted to preserve this idol, until in the day when he made her his own, it should return into his bosom. And so it came to pass that this Palladium of the hermitage was set up at the head of Polly Bottler's little crib, and installed in the post of her favourite doll.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER DEADLY FIRE.

THOUGH Coombe Lorraine was so old a mansion, and so full of old customs, the Christmas of the "comet year" was as dull as a Sunday in a warehouse. Hilary (who had always been the life of the place) was far away, fed upon hardships and short rations. Alice, though full sometimes of spirits, at other times would run away, and fret, and blame herself, as if the whole of the fault was on her side. This was of course an absurd idea; but sensitive girls, in moods of dejection, are not good judges of absurdity; and Alice at such times fully believed that if she had not intercepted so much of her father's affection from her brother, things would have been very different. It might have been so; but the answer was, that she never had wittingly stood between them; but on the contrary had laid herself out, even

at the risk of offending both, to bring their widely different natures into kinder unity.

Sir Roland also was becoming more and more reserved and meditative. He would sit for hours in his book-room, immersed in his favourite studies, or rather absorbed in his misty abstractions. And Lady Valeria did not add to the cheer of the household, although perhaps she did increase its comfort, by suddenly ceasing to interfere with Mrs. Pipkins and everybody else, and sending for the parson of the next parish, because she had no faith in Mr. Hales. That worthy's unprofessional visits, and those of his wife and daughters, were now almost the only pleasant incidents of the day or week. For the country was more and more depressed by the gloomy burden of endless war, the scarcity of the fruits of the earth, and the slaughter of good brave people. So that as the time went on, what with miserable expeditions, pestilence, long campaigns, hard sieges, furious battles, and starvation—there was scarcely any decent family that was not gone into mourning.

Even the Rector, as lucky a man as ever lived, had lost a nephew, or at least a nephew of his dear wife,—which, he said was almost worse

to him—slain in battle, fighting hard for his country and constitution. Mr. Hales preached a beautiful sermon, as good as a book, about it; so that all the parish wept, and three young men enlisted.

The sheep were down in the lowlands now, standing up to their knees in litter, and chewing very slowly; or sidling up against one another in the joy of woolliness; or lying down, with their bare grave noses stretched for contemplation's sake, winking with their gentle eyes, and thanking God for the roof above them, and the troughs in front of them. They never regarded themselves as mutton, nor their fleeces as worsted yarn: it was really sad to behold them, and think that the future could not make them miserable.

No snow had fallen; but all the downs were spread with that sombre brown which is the breath or the blast of the wind-frost. But Alice Lorraine took her daily walk, for her father forbade her to ride on the hill-tops in the bleak and bitter wind. Her thoughts were continually of her brother; and as the cold breeze rattled her cloak, or sprayed her soft hands through her gloves, many a time she said to herself: "I suppose there is no frost in Spain; or not like

this, at any rate. How could the poor fellow sleep in a tent in such dreadful weather as this is?

How little she dreamed that he had to sleep (whenever he got such a blissful chance) not in a tent, but an open trench, with a keener wind and a blacker frost preying on his shivering bones, while cannon-balls and fiery shells in a pitiless storm rushed over him! It was no feather-bed fight that was fought in front of Ciudad Rodrigo. About the middle of January, A.D. 1812, desperate work was going on.

For now there was no time to think of life. Within a certain number of days the fort must be taken, or the army lost. The defences were strong, and the garrison brave, and supplied with artillery far superior to that of the besiegers; the season also, and the bitter weather, fought against the British; and so did the indolence of their allies; and so did British roguery. The sappers could only work in the dark (because of the grape from the ramparts); and working thus, the tools either bent beneath their feet or snapped off short. The contractor had sent out false-grained stuff, instead of good English steel and iron; and if in this world he earned his fortune, he assured his fate in the other.

At length by stubborn perseverance, most of these troubles were overcome, and the English batteries opened. Roar answered roar, and bullet bullet, and the black air was striped with fire and smoke; and men began to study the faces of the men that shot at them, until after some days of hard pounding, it was determined to rush in. All who care to read of valour know what a desperate rush it was,—how strong men struggled, and leaped, and clomb, hung, and swung, on the crest of the breach, like stormy surges towering, and then leaped down upon spluttering shells, drawn swords, and sparkling bayonets.

Before the signal to storm was given, and while men were talking of it, Hilary Lorraine felt most uncomfortably nervous. He did not possess that solid phlegm which is found more often in square-built people; neither had he any share of fatalism, cold or hot. He was nothing more than a spirited young Englishman, very fond of life, hating cruelty, and fearing to have any hand in it. Although he had been in the trenches, and exposed to frequent dangers, he had not been in hand-to-hand conflict yet; and he knew not how he might behave. He knew that he was an officer now in the bravest and

hardiest armies known on earth since the time of the Samnites—although perhaps not the very best behaved, as they proved that self-same night. And not only that, but an officer of the famous Light Division, and the fiercest regiment of that division—everywhere known as the "Fighting-cocks"; and he was not sure that he could fight a frog. He was sure that he never could kill anybody, at least in his natural state of mind; and worse than that, he was not at all sure that he could endure to be killed himself.

However, he made preparation for it. He brought out the Testament Mabel had given him as a parting keepsake, in the moment of true love's piety; and he opened it at a passage marked with a woven tress of her long rich hair—"Soldiers, do that is commanded of you;" and he wondered whether he could manage it. And while he was trembling, not with fear of the enemy, but of his own young heart, the Colonel of that regiment came, and laid his one hand on Hilary's shoulder, and looked into his bright blue eyes. In all the army there was no braver, nobler, or kinder-hearted man, than Colonel C—— of that regiment.

Hilary looked at this true veteran with all

the reverence, and even awe, which a young subaltern (if fit for anything) feels for commanding experience. Never a word he spoke, however, but waited to be spoken to.

"You will do, lad. You will do," said the Colonel, who had little time to spare. "I would rather see you like that, than uproarious, or even as cool as a cucumber. I was just like that, before my first action. Lorraine, you will not disgrace your family, your country, or your regiment."

The Colonel had lost two sons in battle, younger men than Hilary, otherwise he might not have stopped to enter into an ensign's mind. But every word he spoke struck fire in the heart of this gentle youth. True gratitude chokes common answers; and Hilary made none to him. An hour afterwards he made it, by saving the life of the Colonel.

The Light Division (kept close and low from the sight of the sharp French gunners) were waiting in a hollow curve of the inner parallel, where the ground gave way a little, under San Francisco. There had been no time to do anything more than breach the stone of the ramparts; all the outer defences were almost as sound as ever. The Light Division had orders to carry the lesser breach—cost what it

might—and then sweep the ramparts as far as the main breach, where the strong assault was. And so well did they do their work, that they turned the auxiliary into the main attack, and bodily carried the fortress.

For, sooth to say, they expected, but could not manage to wait for, the signal to storm. No sooner did they hear the firing on the right than they began to stamp and swear; for the hay-bags they were to throw into the ditch were not at hand, and not to be seen. "Are we horses, to wait for the hay?" cried an Irishman of the Fifty-second; and with that they all set off as fast as ever their legs could carry them. Hilary laughed—for his sense of humour was never very far to seek—at the way in which these men set off, as if it were a game of football; and at the wonderful mixture of fun and fury in their faces. Also, at this sudden burlesque of the tragedy he expected—with heroes out at heels and elbows, and small-clothes streaming upon the breeze. For the British Government, as usual, left coats, shoes, and breeches, to last for ever.

"Run, lad, run," said Major Malcolm, in his quiet Scottish way; "you are bound to be up with them, as one might say; and your legs are

unco long. I shall na hoory mysell, but take the short cut over the open."

"May I come with you?" asked Hilary, panting.

"If you have na mither nor wife," said the Major; "na wife, of course, by the look of you."

Lorraine had no sense what he was about; for the grape-shot whistled through the air like hornets, and cut off one of his loose fair locks, as he crossed the open with Major Malcolm, to head their hot men at the crest of the glacis.

Now, how things happened after that, or even what things happened at all, that headlong young officer never could tell. As he said in his letter to Gregory Lovejoy—for he was not allowed to write to Mabel, and would not describe such a scene to Alice—"the chief thing I remember is a lot of rushing and stumbling, and swearing and cheering, and staggering and tumbling backward. And I got a tremendous crack on the head from a cannon laid across the top of the breach, but luckily not a loaded one; and I believe there were none of our fellows in front of me; but I cannot be certain, because of the smoke, and the row, and the rush, and confusion; and I saw a Crapaud with a dead level at Colonel C——. I suppose

I was too small game for him,—and I was just in time to slash his trigger-hand off (which I felt justified in doing), and his musket went up in the air and went off, and I just jumped aside from a fine bearded fellow, who rushed at me with a bayonet; and before he could have at me again, he fell dead, shot by his own friends from behind, who were shooting at me—more shame to them—when our men charged with empty muskets. And when the breach was our own, we were formed on the top of the rampart, and went off at double-quick, to help at the main breach, and so we did; and that is about all I know of it."

But the more experienced warriors knew a great deal more of Hilary's doings, especially Colonel C—— of his regiment, and Major Malcolm, and Captain M'Leod. All of these said that "they never saw any young fellow behave so well, for the first time of being under deadly fire; that he might have been 'off his head' for the moment, but that would very soon wear off—or if it did not, all the better, so long as he always did the right thing thus; and (unless he got shot) he would be an honour to the country, the army, and the regiment!"

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO FRY NO PANCAKES.

HAVING no love of bloodshed, and having the luck to know nothing about it, some of us might be glad to turn into the white gate across the lane, leading into Old Applewood farm—if only the franklin would unlock it for anybody, in this war-time. But now he has been getting sharper and sharper, month after month; and hearing so much about sieges and battles, he never can be certain when the county of Kent will be invaded. For the last ten years, he has expected something of the sort at least; and being of a prudent mind, keeps a duck-gun heavily loaded.

Moreover, Mabel is back again from exile with Uncle Catherow; and though the Grower only says that "she is well enough, for aught he knows," when compliments are paid him,

about her good looks, by the neighbourhood, he knows well enough that she is more than that; and he believes all the county to be after her. It is utterly useless to deny—though hot indignation would expand his horticultural breast at the thought—that he may have been just a little set up, by that trifling affair about Hilary. "It never were the cherries," he says to himself, as the author of a great discovery; "aha, I seed it all along! Wife never guessed of it, but I did"—shame upon thee, Grower, for telling thyself such a dreadful "caulker!"—"and now we can see, as plain as a pikestaff, the very thing I seed, when it was that big!" Upon this he shows himself his thumb-nail, and feels that he has earned a glass of his ale.

Mabel, on the other hand, is dreadfully worried by foreign affairs. She wants to know why they must be always fighting; and as nobody can give any other reason, except that they "suppose it is natteral," she only can shake her head very sadly, and ask, "how would you like to have to do it?"

They turn up the udders of the cows, to think out this great question, and the spurting into the pail stops short, and the cow looks round with great bountiful eyes, and a flat

broad nose, and a spotted tongue, desiring to know what they are at with her. Is her milk not worth the milking, pray? . . .

This leads to no satisfaction whatever, upon behalf of any one; and Mabel, after a shiver or two, runs back to the broad old fireplace, to sit in the light and the smell of the wood, to spread her pointed fingers forth, and see how clear they are, and think. For Mabel's hands are quite as pretty as if they were of true Norman blood, instead of the elder Danish cast; and she is very particular now not to have even a brown line under her nails.

And now in the month of February 1812, before the witching festival of St. Valentine was prepared for, with cudgelling of brains, and violent rhymes, and criminal assaults upon grammar, this "flower of Kent"—as the gallant hop-growers in toasting moments entitled her—was sitting, or standing, or drooping her head, or whatever suits best to their metaphor, at or near the fireplace in the warm old simple hall. Love, however warm and faithful, is all the better for a good clear fire, ere ever the snowdrops begin to spring. Also it loves to watch the dancing of the flames, and the flickering light, and even in the smoke discovers some-

thing to itself akin. Mabel was full of these beautiful dreams, because she was left altogether to herself; and because she remembered so well what had happened along every inch of the dining-table; and, above all, because she was sleepy. Long anxiety, and great worry, and the sense of having no one fit to understand a girl—but everybody taking low, and mercenary, and fickle views, and even the most trusty people giving base advice to one, in those odious proverbial forms,—"a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," "fast find fast bind," "there is better fish in the sea," &c.; Mabel thought there never had been such a selfish world to deal with.

Has not every kind of fame, however pure it may be and exalted, its own special disadvantage, lest poor mortals grow too proud? At any rate Mabel now reflected, rather with sorrow than with triumph, upon her fame for pancakes — because it was Shrove-Tuesday now, and all her tender thrills and deep anxieties must be discarded for, or at any rate distracted by, the composition of batter. Her father's sense of propriety was so strong, and that of excellence so keen, that pancakes he would have on Shrove-Tuesday, and pancakes

only from Mabel's hand. She had pleaded however, for leave to make them here in the dining-hall, instead of frying at the kitchen fireplace, because she knew what Sally the cook and Susan the maid would be at with her. Those two girls would never leave her the smallest chance of retiring into her deeper nature, and meditating. Although they could understand nothing at all, they would take advantage of her good temper, to enjoy themselves with the most worn-out jokes. Such trumpery was below Mabel now; and some day or other she would let them know it.

Without thinking twice of such low matters, the maiden was now in great trouble of the heart, by reason of sundry rumours. Paddy from Cork had brought home word from Maidstone only yesterday, that a desperate fight had been fought in Spain, and almost everybody had been blown up. Both armies had made up their minds to die so, that with the drums beating and the colours flying, they marched into a powder-magazine, and tossed up a pin which should be the one to fire it, and blow up the others. And the English had lost the toss, and no one survived to tell the story.

Mabel doubted most of this, though Paddy

vowed that he had known the like, "when wars was wars, and the boys had spirit;" still she felt sure that there had been something, and she longed most sadly to know all about it. Her brother Gregory was in London, keeping his Hilary term, and slaving at his wretched law-books; and she had begged him, if he loved her, to send down all the latest news by John Shorne every market-day—for the post would not carry newspapers. And now, having mixed her batter, she waited, sleepy after sleepless nights, unable to leave her post and go to meet the van, as she longed to do, the while the fire was clearing.

Pensively sitting thus, and longing for somebody to look at her, she glanced at the face of the clock, which was the only face regarding her. And she won from it but the stern frown of time—she must set to at her pancakes. Batter is all the better for standing ready-made for an hour or so, the weaker particles expire, while the good stuff grows the more fit to be fried, and to turn over in the pan properly. With a gentle sigh, the "flower of Kent" put her frying-pan on, just to warm the bottom. No lard for her, but the best fresh-butter—at any rate for the first half-dozen, to be set aside

for her father and mother; after that she would be more frugal perhaps.

But just as the butter began to ooze on the bottom of the pan, she heard, or thought that she heard, a sweet distant tinkle coming through the frosty air; and running to the window she caught beyond doubt the sound of the bells at the corner of the lane, the bells that the horses always wore, when the nights were dark and long; and a throb of eager hope and fear went to her heart at every tinkle.

"I cannot wait; how can I wait?" she cried, with flushing cheeks and eyes twice-laden between smiles and tears; "father's pancakes can wait much better. There, go back," she spoke to the frying-pan, as, with the prudent care of a fine young housewife, she lifted it off and laid it on the hob, for fear of the butter burning; and then, with quick steps, out she went, not even stopping to find a hat, in her hurry to meet the van, and know the best or the worst of the news of the war. For "crusty John," who would go through fire and water to please Miss Mabel, had orders not to come home without the very latest tidings. There was nothing to go to market now; but the van had been up, with a load of straw, to some

mews where the Grower had taken a contract; and, of course, it came loaded back with litter.

While Mabel was all impatience and fright, John Shorne, in the most deliberate manner, descended from the driving-box, and purposely shunning her eager glance, began to unfasten the leader's traces, and pass them through his horny hands, and coil them into elegant spirals, like horns of Jupiter Ammon. Mabel's fear grew worse and worse, because he would not look at her.

"Oh John, you never could have the heart to keep me waiting like this, unless——"

"What! you there, Missie? Lor' now, what can have brought 'ee out this weather?"

"As if you did not see me, John! Why you must have seen me all along."

"This here be such a dreadful horse to smoke," said John, who always shunned downright fibs, "that railly I never knows what I do see, when I be longside of un. Ever since us come out of Sennoaks, he have a been confusing of me. Not that I blames un, for what a can't help. Now there, now! The watter be frozen in trough. Go to the bucket, jackanapes!"

"Oh John, you never do seem to think—

because you have got so many children only fit to go to school, you seem to think——"

"Why, you said as I couldn't think now, Missie, in the last breath of your purty mouth. Well, what is it as I ought to think? Whoa there! Stand still, wull'ee?"

"John, you really are too bad. I have been all the morning making pancakes, and you shan't have one, John Shorne, you shan't, if you keep me waiting one more second."

"Is it consarning they fighting fellows you gets into such a hurry, Miss? Well, they have had a rare fight, sure enough! Fourscore officers gone to glory, besides all the others as was not worth counting!"

"Oh John, you give me such a dreadful pain here! Let me know the worst, I do implore you."

"He ain't one of 'em. Now, is that enough?" John Shorne made so little of true love now, and forgot his early situations so, in the bosom of a hungry family, that he looked upon Mabel's "coorting" as an agreeable playground for little jokes. But now he was surprised and frightened at her way of taking them.

"There, don't 'ee cry now, that's a dear,"

he said, as she leaned on the shaft of the waggon, and sobbed so that the near wheeler began in pure sympathy to sniff at her. "Lord bless 'ee, there be nothing to cry about. He've abeen and dooed wonders, that 'a hath."

"Of course he has, John; he could not help it. He was sure to do wonders, don't you see, if only—if only they did not stop him."

"He hathn't killed Bonypart yet," said John, recovering his vein of humour, as Mabel began to smile through her tears; "but I b'lieve he wool, if he gooeth on only half so well as he have begun. For my part, I'd soonder kill dree of un than sell out in a bad market, I know. But here, you can take it, and read all about un. Lor' bless me, wherever have I put the papper?"

"Now do be quick, John, for once in your life. Dear John, do try to be quick, now."

"Strornary gallantry of a young hofficer! Could have sworn that it were in my breeches-pocket. I always thought 'gallantry' meant something bad. A running after strange women, and that."

"Oh no, John—oh no, John, it never does. How can you think such dreadful things? But how long are you going to be, John?"

"Well, it did when I wor a boy, that's certain. But now they changes everything so—even the words we was born to. It have come to mean killing of strange men, hath it? Wherever now can I have put that papper? I must have dropped un on the road, after all."

"You never can have done such a stupid thing!—such a wicked, cruel thing, John Shorne! If you have, I will never forgive you. Very likely you put it in the crown of your hat."

"Sure enough, and so I did. You must be a witch, Miss Mabel. And here's the very corner I turned down when I read it to the folk at the Pig and Whistle. 'Glorious British victory—capture of Shoedad Rodleygo—eighty British officers killed, and forty great guns taken!' There, there, bless your bright eyes! now will you be content with it?"

"Oh, give it me, give it me! How can I tell until I have read it ten times over?"

Crusty John blessed all the girls of the period (becoming more and more too many for him) as his master's daughter ran away to devour that greasy journal. And by the time he had pulled his coat off, and shouted for Paddy and another man, and stuck his own

pitchfork into the litter, as soon as they had backed the wheelers, Mabel was up in her own little room, and down on her knees to thank the Lord for the abstract herself had made of it. Somehow or other, the natural impulse of all good girls, at that time, was to believe that they had a Creator and Father, whom to thank for all mercies. But that idea has been improved since then.

CHAPTER X.

LADY COKE UPON LITTLETON.

At Coombe Lorraine these things had been known and entered into some time ago. For Sir Roland had not left his son so wholly uncared for in a foreign land as Hilary in his sore heart believed. In his regiment there was a certain old major, lame, and addicted to violent language, but dry and sensible according to his lights, and truthful, and upright, and quarrelsome. Burning to be first, as he always did in every desperate conflict, Major Clumps saw the young fellows get in front of him, and his temper exploded always. "Come back, come back, you——" condemned offspring of canine lineage, he used to shout; "let an honest man have a fair start with you! Because my feet are—there you go again.; no consideration, any of you!"

This Major Clumps was admirably "con-

nected," being the nephew of Lord de Lampnor, the husband of Lady Valeria's friend. So that by this means it was brought round that Hilary's doings should be reported. And Lady Valeria had received a letter in which her grandson's exploits at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo were so recounted that Alice wept, and the ancient lady smiled with pride; and even Sir Roland said, "Well, after all, that boy can do something."

The following afternoon the master of Coombe Lorraine was sent for, to have a long talk with his mother about matters of business. Now Sir Roland particularly hated business; his income was enough for all his wants; his ambition (if ever he had any) was a vague and vaporous element; he left to his lawyers all matters of law; and even the management of his land, but for his mother's strong opposition, he would gladly have left to a steward or agent, although the extent of his property scarcely justified such an appointment. So he entered his mother's room that day with a languid step and reluctant air.

The lady paid very little heed to that. Perhaps she even enjoyed it a little. Holding that every man is bound to attend to his own

affairs, she had little patience and no sympathy with such philosophic indifference. On the other hand, Sir Roland could not deny himself a little quiet smile, when he saw his mother's great preparations to bring him both to book and deed.

Lady Valeria Lorraine was sitting as upright as she had sat throughout her life, and would sit, until she lay down for ever. On the table before her were several thick and portentously dirty documents, arranged and docketed by her own sagacious hand; and beyond these, and opened at pages for reference, lay certain old law-books of a most deterrent guise and attitude. Sheppard's "Touchstone" (before Preston's time), Littleton's "Tenures," Viner's "Abridgment," Comyn's "Digest," Glanville, Plowden, and other great authors, were here prepared to cause delicious confusion in the keenest feminine intellect; and Lady Valeria was quite sure now that they all contradicted one another.

After the formal salutation, which she always insisted upon, the venerable lady began to fuss about a little, and pretend to be at a loss with things. She was always dressed as if she expected a visit from the royal family; and it was as good as a lecture for any slovenly young

girls to see how cleverly she avoided soil of dirty book, or dirtier parchment, upon her white cuffs or Flemish lace. Even her delicate pointed fingers, shrunken as they were with age, had a knack of flitting over grime, without attracting it.

"I daresay you are surprised," she said, with her usual soft and courteous smile, "at seeing me employed like this, and turning lawyer in my old age."

Sir Roland said something complimentary, knowing that it was expected of him. The ancient lady had always taught him—however erroneous the doctrine—that no man who is at a loss for the proper compliment to a lady deserves to be thought a gentleman. She always had treated her son as a gentleman, dearer to her than other gentlemen; but still to be regarded in that light mainly. And he, perhaps by inheritance, had been led to behave to his own son thus—a line of behaviour warmly resented by the impetuous Hilary.

"Now I beg you to attend—you must try to attend," continued Lady Valeria: "rouse yourself up, if you please, dear Roland. This is not a question of astrologers, or any queer thing of that sort, but a common-sense matter,

and, I might say, a difficult point of law, perhaps."

"That being so," Sir Roland answered, with a smile of bright relief, "our course becomes very simple. We have nothing that we need trouble ourselves to be puzzled with uncomfortably. Messrs. Crookson, Hack, and Clinker—they know how to keep in arrear, and to charge."

"It is your own fault, my dear Roland, if they overcharge you. Everybody will do so, when they know that you mean to put up with it. Your dear father was under my guidance much more than you have ever been, and he never let people overcharge him—more than he could help, I mean."

"I quite perceive the distinction, mother. You have put it very clearly. But how does that bear upon the matter you have now to speak of?"

"In a great many ways. This account of Hilary's desperate behaviour, as I must call it upon sound reflection, leads me to consider the great probability of something happening to him. There are many battles yet to be fought, and some of them may be worse than this. You remember what Mr. Malahide said when

your dear father would insist upon that resettlement of the entire property in the year 1799."

Sir Roland knew quite well that it was not his dear father at all, but his mother, who had insisted upon that very stringent and ill-advised proceeding, in which he himself had joined reluctantly, and only by dint of her persistence. However, he did not remind her of this.

"To be sure," he replied, "I remember it clearly; and I have his very words somewhere. He declined to draw it in accordance with the instructions of our solicitors, until his own opinion upon it had been laid before the family —a most unusual course, he said, for counsel in chambers to adopt, but having some knowledge of the parties concerned, he hoped they would pardon his interference. And then his words were to this effect—'The operation of such a settlement may be most injurious. The parties will be tying their own hands most completely, without—as far as I can perceive—any adequate reason for doing so. Supposing, for instance, there should be occasion for raising money upon these estates during the joint lives of the grandson and granddaughter, and before the granddaughter is of age, there will be no means of doing it. The limitation to her, which is a

most unusual one in such cases, will preclude the possibility of representing the fee-simple. The young lady is now just five years old, and if this extraordinary settlement is made, no marketable title can be deduced for the next sixteen years, except, of course, in the case of her decease.' And many other objections he made, all of which, however, were overruled; and after that protest, he prepared the settlement."

"The matter was hurried through your father's state of health; for at that very time he was on his deathbed. But no harm whatever has come of it, which shows that we were right, and Mr. Malahide quite wrong. But I have been looking to see what would happen, in case poor Hilary—ah, it was his own fault that all these restrictions were introduced. Although he was scarcely twelve years old, he had shown himself so thoroughly volatile, so very easy to lead away, and, as it used to be called by vulgar people, so 'happy-go-lucky,' that your dear father wished, while he had the power, to disable him from lessening any further our lessened estates. And but for that settlement, where might we be?"

"You know, my dear mother, that I never liked that exceedingly complicated and most

mistrustful settlement. And if I had not been so sick of all business, after the loss of my dear wife, even your powers of persuasion would have failed to make me execute it. At any rate, it has had one good effect. It has robbed poor Hilary, to a great extent, of the charms that he must have possessed for the Jews."

"How can they discover such things? With a firm of trusty and most respectable lawyers—to me it is quite wonderful."

"How many things are wondrous! and nothing more wondrous than man himself—except, of course, a Jew. They do find out; and they never let us find out how they managed it. But do let me ask you, my dear mother, what particular turn of thought has compelled you to be so learned?"

"You mean these books? Well, let me think. I quite forget what it was that I wanted. It is useless to flatter me, Roland, now. My memory is not as it was, nor my sight, nor any other gift. However, I ought to be very thankful; and I often try to be so."

"Take a little time to think," Sir Roland said, in his most gentle tone; "and then, if it does not occur to you, we can talk of it some other time."

"Oh, now I remember! They told me something about the poor boy being smitten with some girl of inferior station. Of course, even he would have a little more sense than ever to dream of marrying her. But young men, although they mean nothing, are apt to say things that cost money. And above all others, Hilary may have given some grounds for damages—he is so inconsiderate! Now, if that should be so, and they give a large verdict, as a low-born jury always does against a well-born gentleman, several delicate points arise. In the first place, has he any legal right to fall in love under this settlement? And if not, how can any judgment take effect on his interest? And again, if he should fall in battle, would that stay proceedings? And if all these points should be settled against us, have we any power to raise the money? For I know that you have no money, Roland, except what you receive from land; as under my advice every farthing of accumulation has been laid out in buying back, field by field, portions of our lost property."

"Yes, my dear mother; and worse than that; every field so purchased has been declared or assured—or whatever they call it—to follow

the trusts of this settlement; so that I verily believe if I wanted £5000 for any urgent family purposes, I must raise it—if at all—upon mere personal security. But surely, dear mother, you cannot find fault with the very efficient manner in which your own desires have been carried out."

"Well, my son, I have acted for the best, and according to your dear father's plans. When I married your father," the old lady continued, with a soft quiet pride, which was quite her own, "it was believed, in the very best quarters, that the Duchess Dowager of Chalcorhin, of whom perhaps you may have heard me speak——"

"Truly yes, mother, every other day."

"And, my dear son, I have a right to do so of my own godmother, and great-aunt. The sneering spirit of the present day cannot rob us of all our advantages. However, your father (as was right and natural on his part) felt a conviction—as those low Methodists are always saying of themselves—that there would be a hundred thousand pounds to help him in what he was thinking of. But her Grace was vexed at my marriage; and so, as you know, my dear Roland, I brought the Lorraines nothing."

"Yes, my dear mother, you brought yourself, and your clear mind, and clever management."

"Will you always think that of me, Roland, dear? Whatever happens, when I am gone, will you always believe that I did my best?"

Sir Roland was surprised at his mother's very unusual state of mind. And he saw how her delicate face was softened from its calm composure. And the like emotion moved himself; for he was a man of strong feeling, though he deigned so rarely to let it out, and froze it so often with fatalism.

"My dearest mother," he answered, bowing his silver hair over her snowy locks, "surely you know me well enough to make such a question needless. A more active and devoted mind never worked for one especial purpose—the welfare of those for whose sake you have abandoned show and grandeur. Ay, mother, and with as much success as our hereditary faults allowed. Since your labours began, we must have picked up fifty acres."

"Is that all you know of it, Roland?" asked Lady Valeria, with a short sigh; "all my efforts will be thrown away, I greatly fear, when I am gone. One hundred and fifty-six acres

and a half have been brought back into the Lorraine rent-roll, without even counting the hedgerows. And now there are two things to be done, to carry on this great work well. That interloper, Sir Remnant Chapman, a man of comparatively modern race, holds more than two thousand acres of the best and oldest Lorraine land. He wishes young Alice to marry his son, and proposes a very handsome settlement. Why, Roland, you told me all about it,—though not quite as soon as you should have done."

"I do not perceive that I neglected my duty. If I did so, surprise must have 'knocked me out of time,' as our good Struan expresses it."

"Mr. Hales! Mr. Hales, the clergyman! I cannot imagine what he could mean. But it must have been something low, of course; either badger-baiting, or prize-fighting—though people of really good position have a right to like such things. But now we must let that poor stupid Sir Remnant, who cannot even turn a compliment, have his own way about silly Alice, for the sake of more important things."

"My dear mother, you sometimes try me.

What can be more important than Alice? And to what overpowering influence is she to be sacrificed?"

"It is useless to talk like that, Sir Roland. She must do her best, like everybody else who is not of ignoble family. The girl has plenty of pride, and will be the first to perceive the necessity. 'Twill not be so much for the sake of the settlement, for that of course will go with her; but we must make it a stipulation, and have it set down under hand and seal, that Sir Remnant, and after his time his son, shall sell to us, at a valuation, any pieces of our own land which we may be able to repurchase. Now, Roland, you never would have thought of that. It is a most admirable plan, is it not?"

"It is worthy of your ingenuity, mother. But will Sir Remnant agree to it? He is fond of his acres, like all landowners."

"One acre is as good as another to a man of modern lineage. Some of that land passed from us at the time of the great confiscation, and some was sold by that reckless man, the last Sir Hilary but one. The Chapmans have held very little of it for even so much as two centuries; how then can they be attached to

it? No, no. You must make that condition, Roland, the first and the most essential point. As for the settlement, that is nothing; though of course you will also insist upon it. For a girl of Alice's birth and appearance, we could easily get a larger settlement and a much higher position, by sending her to London for one season, under Lady de Lampnor. But how would that help us towards getting back the land?"

"You look so learned," said Sir Roland, smiling, "with all those books which you seem to have mastered, that surely we may employ you to draw the deed for signature by Sir Remnant."

"I have little doubt that I could do it," replied the ancient lady, who took everything as in earnest; "but I am not so strong as I was, and therefore I wish you to push things forward. I have given up, as you know, my proper attention to many little matters (which go on very badly without me) simply that all my small abilities might be devoted to this great purpose. I hope to have still a few years left—but two things I must see accomplished before I can leave this world in peace. Alice must marry Captain Chapman, upon the con-

ditions which I have expressed, and Hilary must marry a fortune, with special clauses enabling him to invest it in land upon proper trusts. The boy is handsome enough for anything; and his fame for courage, and his martial bearing, and above all his regimentals, will make him irresistible. But he must not stay at the wars too long. It is too great a risk to run."

"Well, my dear mother, I must confess that your scheme is a very fine one. Supposing, I mean, that the object is worth it; of which I am by no means sure. I have not made it the purpose of my life to recover the Lorraine estates; I have not toiled and schemed for that end; although," he added with dry irony, which quite escaped his mother's sense, "it is of course a far less exertion to sell one's children, with that view. But there are several hitches in your little plan: for instance, Alice hates Captain Chapman, and Hilary loves a girl without a penny—though the Grower must have had good markets lately, according to the price of vegetables." Clever as Sir Roland was, he made the mistake of the outer world: there are no such things as "good markets."

"Alice is a mere child," replied her grand-

mother, smiling placidly; "she cannot have the smallest idea yet, as to what she likes or dislikes. The captain is quite as well bred as his father; and he can drive four-in-hand. I wonder that she has shown such presumption, as either to like or dislike him. It is your fault, Roland. Perpetual indulgence sets children up to such dreadful things; of which they must be broken painfully, having been encouraged so."

"My dear mother," Sir Roland answered, keeping his own opinions to himself, "you clearly know how to manage young girls, a great deal better than I do. Will you talk to Alice (in your own convincing and most eloquent manner) if I send her up to you?"

"With the greatest pleasure," said Lady Valeria, having long expected this; "you may safely leave her to me, I believe. Chits of girls must be taught their place. But I mean to be very quiet with her. Let me see her to-morrow, Roland; I am tired now, and could not manage her, without more talking than I am fit for. Therefore I will say 'good evening.'"

CHAPTER XI.

ACHES *v.* ACRES.

ALICE had "plenty of spirit of her own," which of course she called "sense of dignity;" but in spite of it all, she was most unwilling to encounter her valiant grandmother. And she knew that this encounter was announced the moment she was sent for.

"Is my hair right? Are my bows right? Has the old dog left any paw-marks on me?" she asked herself; but would rather have died —as in her quick way she said to herself—than have confessed her fright by asking any of the maids to tell her. Betwixt herself and her grandmother there was little love lost, and still less kept; for each looked down upon the other from the heights of impartial duty. "A flighty, romantic, unfledged girl, with no deference towards her superiors" — "A cold-blooded,

crafty, plotting old woman, without a bit of faith in any one;"—thus each would have seen the other's image, if she had looked into her own mind, and faced its impressions honestly.

The elder lady, having cares of her own, contrived for the most part to do very well without seeing much of her grandchild; who on the other hand was quite resigned to the affliction of this absence. But Alice could never perceive the justice of the reproaches wherewith she was met, whenever she came, for not having come more often where she was not wanted.

Now with all her courage ready, and not a sign in eye, face, or bearing, of the disquietude all the while fluttering in the shadow of her heart, the young lady looked at the ancient lady respectfully, and saluted her. Two fairer types of youth and age, of innocence and experience, of maiden grace and matron dignity, scarcely need be sought for; and the resemblance of their features heightened the contrast of age and character. A sculptor might have been pleased to reckon the points of beauty inherited by the maiden from the matron—the slim round neck, the graceful carriage of the well-shaped head, the elliptic arch of brow, the

broad yet softly moulded forehead, as well as the straight nose and delicate chin—a strong resemblance of details, but in the expression of the whole an even stronger difference. For Alice, besides the bright play of youth and all its glistening carelessness, was gifted with a kinder and larger nature than her grandmother. And as a kind large-fruited tree, to all who understand it, shows—even by its bark and foliage and the expression of its growth—the vigour of the virtue in it, and liberality of its juice; so a fine sweet human nature breathes and shines in the outer aspect, brightens the glance, and enriches the smile, and makes the whole creature charming.

But Alice, though blest with this very nice manner of contemplating humanity, was quite unable to bring it to bear upon the countenance of her grandmother. We all know how the very best benevolence perpetually is pulled up short; and even the turn of a word, or a look, or a breath of air with a chill in it scatters fine ideas into corners out of harmony.

"You may take a chair, my dear, if you please, said Lady Valeria, graciously; you seem to be rather pale to-day. I hope you have not taken anything likely to disagree with you. If

you have, there is still a little drop left of my famous ginger cordial. You make a face! That is not becoming. You must get over those childish tricks. You are—let me see, how old are you?"

"Seventeen years and a half, madam; about last Wednesday fortnight."

"It is always good to be accurate, Alice. 'About' is a very loose word indeed. It may have been either that day or another."

"It must have been either that day, or some other," said Alice, gravely curtsying.

"You inherit this catchword style from your father. I pass it over, as you are so young. But the sooner you leave it off, the better. There are many things now that you must leave off. For instance, you must not pretend to be witty. It is not in our family."

"I did not suppose that it was, grandmother."

"There used to be some wit, when I was young; but none of it has descended. There is nothing more fatal to a young girl's prospects than a sad ambition for jesting. And it is concerning your prospects now, that I wish to advise you kindly. I hear from your father a very sad thing—that you receive with ingra-

titude the plans which we have formed for you."

"My father has not told me of any plans at all about me."

"He may not have told you; but you know them well. Consulting your own welfare and the interest of the family, we have resolved that you should at once receive the addresses of Captain Chapman."

"You cannot be so cruel, I am sure. Or if you are, my father cannot. I would sooner die than so degrade myself."

"Young girls always talk like that when their fancy does not happen to be caught. When, however, that is the case, they care not how they degrade themselves. This throws upon their elders the duty of judging and deciding for them, as to what will conduce to their happiness."

"To hear Captain Chapman's name alone conduces to my misery."

"I beg you, Alice, to explain what you mean. Your expressions are strong; and I am not sure that they are altogether respectful."

"I mean them to be quite respectful, grandmother; and I do not mean them to be too strong. Indeed I should despair of making them so."

"You are very provoking. Will you kindly state your objections to Captain Chapman?"

Alice for the first time dropped her eyes under the old lady's steadfast gaze. She felt that her intuition was right, but she could not put it into words.

"Is it his appearance, may I ask? Is he too short for your ideal? Are his eyes too small, and his hair too thin? Does he slouch in walking, and turn his toes in? Is it any trumpery of that sort?" asked Lady Valeria, though in her heart such things were not scored as "trumpery."

"Were such things trumpery when you were young?" her grandchild longed to ask, but duty and good training checked her.

"His appearance is bad enough," she replied, "but I do not attach much importance to that."

"As if I believed it!" thought Lady Valeria.

"Then what is it that proves fatal to him in your sagacious judgment?"

"I beg you as a favour not to ask me, madam. I cannot—I cannot explain to you."

"Nonsense, child," said the old lady smiling, "you would not be so absurd if you had only seen a little good society. If you are so bashful,

you may look away; but at any rate you must tell me."

"Then it is this," the maiden answered, with her grey eyes full on her grandmother's face, and a rich blush adding to their lustre; "Captain Chapman is not what I call a good man."

"In what way? How? What have you heard against him? If he is not perfect, you can make him so."

"Never, never! He is a very bad man. He despises all women; and he—he looks—he stares quite insolently—even at me!"

"Well, this is a little too good, I declare!" exclaimed her grandmother, with as loud a laugh as good breeding ever indulges in. "My dear child, you must go to London; you must be presented at Court; you must learn a little of the ways of the world; and see the first gentleman in Europe. How his Royal Highness will laugh, to be sure! I shall send him the story through Lady de Lampnor, that a young lady hates and abhors her intended, because he even ventures to look at her!"

"You cannot understand me, madam. And I will not pretend to argue with you."

"I should hope not indeed. If we spread this story at the beginning of the season, and

have you presented while it is fresh, we may save you, even yet, from your monster, perhaps. There will be such eagerness to behold you, simply because you must not be looked at, that everybody will be at your feet, all closing their eyes for your sake, I should hope."

Alice was a very sweet-tempered girl; but all the contempt with which in her heart she unconsciously regarded her grandmother, was scarcely enough to keep her from flashing forth at this common raillery. Large tears of pride and injured delicacy formed in her eyes, but she held them in; only asking with a curtsy, "May I go now, if you please?"

"To be sure, you may go. You have done quite enough. You have made me laugh so that I want my tea. Only remember one serious thing—the interest of the family requires that you should soon learn to be looked at. You must begin to take lessons at once. Within six months you must be engaged, and within twelve months you must be married to Captain Stephen Chapman."

"I trow not," said Alice to herself, as with another curtsy, and a shudder, she retreated.

But she had not long been sitting by herself, and feeling the bitterness of defeat, before she

determined, with womanly wit, to have a triumph somewhere; so she ran at once to her father's room, and he of course was at home to her. "If you please, dear papa, you must shut your books, and you must come into this great chair, and you must not shut even one of your eyes, but listen in the most respectful manner to all I have to say to you."

"Well, my dear," Sir Roland answered; "what must be must. You are a thorough tyrant. The days are certainly getting longer; but they scarcely seem to be long enough for you to torment your father."

"No candles, papa, if you please, as yet. What I have to say can be said in the dark, and that will enable you to look at me, papa, which otherwise you could scarcely do. Is it true that you are plotting to marry me to that odious Captain Chapman?"

Sir Roland began to think what to say; for his better nature often told him to wash his hands of this loathsome scheme.

"Are you so tired of me already," said the quick girl, with sound of tears in her voice; "have I behaved so very badly, and shown so little love for you, that you want to kill me so very soon, father?"

"Alice, come Alice, you know how I love you; and that all that I care for is your own good."

"And are we so utterly different, papa, in our tastes, and perceptions, and principles, that you can ever dream that it is good for me to marry Mr. Chapman?"

"Well, my dear, he is a very nice man, quiet, and gentle, and kind to every one, and most attentive to his father. He could place you in a very good position, Alice; and you would still be near me. Also, there are other reasons making it desirable."

"What other reasons, papa, may I know? Something about land, I suppose. Land is at the bottom of every mischief."

"You desperate little radical! Well, I will confess that land has a good deal to do with it."

"Papa, am I worth twenty acres to you? Tell the truth now, am I?"

"My darling, you are so very foolish. How can you ask such a question?"

"Well, then, am I worth fifty? Come now, am I worth as much as fifty? Don't be afraid now, and say that I am, if you really feel that I am not."

"How many fifties—would you like to know? Come to me, and I will tell you."

"No, not yet, papa. There is no kiss for you, unless you say I am worth a thousand!"

"You little coquette! You keep all your coquetries for your own old father, I do believe."

"Then tell me that I am worth a thousand, father—a thousand acres of good rich land with trees and hedges, and cows and sheep—surely I never can be worth all that: or at any rate not to you, papa."

"You are worth to me," said Sir Roland Lorraine—as she fell into his arms, and sobbed, and kissed him, and stroked his white beard, and then sobbed again—"not a thousand acres, but ten thousand—land, and hearth, and home, and heart!"

"Then after all you do love me, father. I call nothing love that loves anything else. And how much," she asked, with her arms round his neck, and her red lips curving to a crafty whisper—"how much should I be worth, if I married a man I despise and dislike? Enough for my grave, and no more, papa; just the size, of your small book-table."

Here she fell away, lost in her father's arms and for the moment could only sigh, with her

lips and eyelids quivering; and Sir Roland watching her pale loving face, was inclined to hate his own mother. "You shall marry no one, my own child," he whispered through her unbraided hair; "no one whom you do not love dearly, and who is not thoroughly worthy of you."

"Then I will not marry any one, papa," she answered, with a smile reviving; "for I do not love any one a bit, papa, except my own father, and my own brother; and Uncle Struan, of course, and so on, in an outer and milder manner. And as for being worthy of me, I am not worth very much, I know. Still, if I am worth only half an acre, I must be too good for that Captain Chapman."

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE DEADLY BREACH.

THE stern and strong will of a single man is a very fine thing for weaker men—and still more so for women—to dwell upon. But the stern strong will of a host of men, set upon one purpose, and resolved to win it or die for it, is a power that conquers the powers of earth and of nature arrayed against them. The British army was resolved to carry by storm Badajos; and their vigorous manner of setting about it, and obstinate way of going on with it, overcame at last the strength of all that tried to stand before them.

This was the more to their credit, because—the worst of all things for a man to get over—even the weather itself was against them. Nothing makes a deeper depression in the human system than long spite of weather does.

The sense of luck is still over us all (in spite of philosophy and mathematics), and of all the behaviour of fortune, what comes home to our roofs and hats so impressively as the weather does?

Now, thoroughly as these British men were resolved to get within the wall, with equal thoroughness very brave Frenchmen were resolved to keep them out. And these had the weather in their favour; for it is an ill wind that blows no one any good; and the rain that rains on the just and unjust seems to have a preference for the latter. Though it must be acknowledged in the present case, that having a view to justice, a man of equal mind might say there was not too much on either side. At any rate, the rain kept raining, for fear of any mistake among them.

Moreover, the moon, between the showers, came out at night, or the sun by day—according to the habits of each of them—exactly when they were wanted by the Frenchmen, and not at all by the Englishmen. If an Englishman wanted to work in the dark the moon would get up just behind his back; and muskets, rifles, and cannon itself were trained on him, as at a target; and his only chance was to fall flat on

his stomach, and shrink back like a toad in a bed of strawberries. And this made us eager to advance, *per contra*.

And after being shot at for a length of time, almost every man one can meet with desires to have his turn of shooting. Not for the sake of revenge, or anything low at all in that way; but simply from that love of fairness which lies hidden—too deep sometimes—somewhere or other in all of us. We are anxious to do, one to another, as the others desire to do to us; and till we come to a different condition, men must shoot and be shot at.

All these peaceable distinctions, and regards of right and wrong, were utterly useless and out of place in front of the walls of Badajos. Right or wrong, the place must be taken; and this was the third time of trying it. Fury, frenzy, rushing slaughter, and death (that lies still when the heat is over), who can take and tell them truly; and if he could, who would like to do it, or who would thank him to hear of it?

All the British army knew that the assault was to be made that night; and the Frenchmen, as appeared by-and-by, knew right well what was coming. For when the April sun went

down in the brightest azure of all blue skies, a hush of wonder and of waiting fell and lay upon all the scene.

The English now were grown to be what they always grow to be with much fighting—solid in their ways, and (according to the nature of things) hot or cool with discipline, square in their manner of coming up, and hard to be sent back again, certain sure of their strength to conquer, and ready to charge the devil himself if he had the courage to wait for them. They were under a man who knew how to lead them, and trusted them to follow him; their blood was stirred without grand harangues or melodramatic eloquence.

Every man in that solid army knew his own work, and meant to do it, shoulder to shoulder, with rival hardihood and contagious scorn of death.

The walls were higher and the approach much harder than at Ciudad Rodrigo; the garrison stronger, and the captain a strenuous and ingenious warrior. Therefore on the 6th of April 1812, as the storming parties watched the sunset fading along the Guadiana, and the sudden fall of night, which scarcely gives a bird time to twitter on his roost, they wanted no

prophet to tell them how different their number would be to-morrow. But still, as the proper and comforting law of human nature ordains it, every man thought, or at any rate hoped, that his messmate rather than himself was the one to leave a widow and orphans by midnight.

Hilary Lorraine was now beginning to get used to fighting. At first, in spite of all his talk about his sword and so on, blows and bloodshed went against the grain of his kind and gay nature. He even thought, in his fresh aversion at so many corpses, that war was a worse institution than law. That error, however, he was beginning to abjure, through the power of custom, aided by two sapient reflections. The first of these was that without much slaughter there can be no real glory—an article which the young man had now made up his mind to attain; and his other wise recollection was that a Frenchman is the natural enemy of the human race, and must, at all hazards and at any sacrifice of pious lives, be extirpated. Moreover, he may have begun to share, by virtue of his amiability, the views of his brother-officers, which of course were duly professional. So that this young fellow, upon the whole, was as full of fight as the best of them.

"No man died that night with more glory —yet many died, and there was much glory." So writes the Thucydides of this war; not about Hilary (as good-luck willed it), but one of his senior officers. And that such a sentence should ever have been written, is a thing to think about. With all that dash of bright carnage fresh on the page of one who did his duty so grandly both with sword and pen, peaceful writers (knowing more of sandy commons and the farm-house fagot than of fascines and gabions, of capons than of caponnières, and of shot grapes than of grapeshot) wisely may stick to the gardening-knife, or in fiercest moments the pruning-hook; and have nothing to say to the stark sword-blade.

Such duty becomes tenfold a pleasure, when the sword-blades not only swing overhead or glitter at the unarmed breast; but, bolted into great beams of wood at the most offensive angles, are flashing in the dark at the stomach of a man, like a vast electric porcupine; while bursting shells and powder-barrels, and blasts of grapeshot thick as hail (drowning curses, shrieks, and wails), sweep the craggy rampart clear, or leave only corpses roasting. Such, and worse by a thousandfold than words may render

or mind conceive, was the struggle of that awful night at the central breach of Badajos; and here was Hilary Lorraine, wounded, spent with fruitless efforts, dashed backward on spikes and on bayonet-points, trampled under foot, and singed by the beard of a smouldering comrade, yet glad even to lie still for a minute in the breathless depths of exhaustion. "All up with me now" he was faintly thinking—"perhaps my father will be satisfied. Good-bye, dear Alice, and darling Mabel—and good-night to this poor Hilary!"

And here his career—of fame or of shame—must have been over and done with, if he had not already won good-liking among the men of his company. For one of them with his next step ready to be planted on the young officer's breast, caught a view of his face, by the light of a fire-ball, stopped short, and stooped over him.

"Blow me!" he exclaimed, while likely to be blown into a thousand pieces; "if this bain't the very young chap as saved me when I wur a dropping upon the road. One good turn desarves another. Here, Bob, lend a hand, my boy."

"A hand! I can't lend thee a hinch," cried

Bob; "they be squazing me up like a squatting match."

For while all the front men were thus lying dead, the men from the rear would not stop from shoving, and bodily heaving the others before them, as buffaloes rush when they lose their wits. They thrust, every man his front man on the *chevaux de frise*, as if it were a joke, with that bitter recklessness of life and readiness to take their own turn at death which drive in one solid mass all true Britons, and their cousins across the Atlantic, whenever the strong blood is churned within them. And yet all this time they know what they are about.

And so did these two soldiers now. Neither time nor room had they to lift poor Hilary out of the bed of shattered granite where he lay, with wedged spikes sticking into him. And the two men who wanted to do it were swept by the surge of living bodies upwards. But first they did this—which saved his life—they threw two muskets across him. Loaded or empty, they knew not; and of course it could not matter so long as the climbing men (clambering hard to their death) found it readier for their feet to tread on the bridge of these

muskets (piered with blocks of granite) than on the ribs of poor Hilary. So the struggle went on; and there he lay, and began to peep under other people's legs.

In this rather difficult position he failed to make out anything at all to satisfy or to please him. Listeners hear little good of themselves, and lurking gazers have about the same luck. Not that Hilary was to be blamed for lying in this groove, inasmuch as he really had no chance or even time to get out of it. A great hulking Yorkshireman (as he turned out) had fallen obliquely upon Hilary's bridge, and was difficult to push aside, and quite impossible to lift up. He groaned a good deal, but he was not dead—if he had not been a Yorkshireman the one fact might have implied the other, but Yorkshiremen do groan after death: however, he was not dead; and he keeps a mill on the Swale at this minute.

Hilary, under these disadvantages, naturally tried to lessen them; and though he was pretty safe where he lay—unless a shell came through the Yorkshireman, and that would have needed a very strong charge—still he became discontented. What with the pain of his wound or wounds (for he knew to his cost that he had

several of them), also the violent thirst which followed, as well as the ache of his cramped position, and a piece of spiked plank that worried him, he began to grow more and more desirous of a little change of air.

"Now, my dear sir," he said, with his usual courtesy, to the Yorkshireman, "you do not mean to be in my way of course, but the fact is that I can't get out of this hole by reason of your incumbency. If you could only, without inconvenience, give a little roll to the right or left, you would be in quite as good a position yourself; or if you have grown attached to this particular spot, I would try to replace you afterwards."

"Grah!" was the Yorkshireman's only reply, a grunt of contempt and of surly temper, which plainly meant "go to—Halifax."

"This is uncivil of you," answered Hilary; "it is getting so hot in here that I shall be forced to retort, I fear, your discourtesy. I beg your pardon a thousand times for making this sharp suggestion."

With these words he pricked the great son of the north in a sensitive part with a loose spike he had found by the light of a French fireball; whereupon, with a curse, the fellow

rolled over, like one of his father's millstones. Then Hilary crawled from his hole of refuge, and stiffly resting on his hand and knees, surveyed the scene of carnage.

The moon had now risen, and was shining gloomily under a stripe of heavy cloud, over the bastion of the Trinidad, and into the channel of the fatal breach, down which the sultry night wind sighed, laden with groans, whenever curses and roar of artillery left room for them. The breach itself was still unstormed, and looked more terrible than ever; for the sword-blades fixed at the top were drenched and reeking to the hilt with red, and three had corpses impaled upon them with scarlet coats, gay in the moonlight. The rest, like the jaws of a gorging crocodile, presented their bloody jaggedness, clogged here and there with limbs, or heads, or other parts of soldiers. For the moment the British had fallen back to the other side of the ravelin, and their bugles were sounding for the retreat, while the triumphant French were shooting, and shouting, "Why enter you not at all Badajos, messieurs? It is a good place for the English health. Why enter you not then Badajos?"

The sullen Britons answered not, but waited

for orders to begin again; recovering breath, and heart, and spirit, and gathering closer to one another, to be sure that anybody was alive. For more than two thousand men lay dead or dying in a space of one hundred yards square. Of the survivors, every man felt that every other man had done his best—but how about himself? Could he be sure that he never had flinched, nor even hung back for a foot or so, nor pushed any other man on to the spikes to save himself from going there? And was that cursed fortress never to be taken by any skill or strength? was even Lord Wellington wrong for once in setting them to do it? and was it to be said in every British churchyard that Britons were not of the stuff of their fathers?

Sadly thus thinking, but after the manner of our nation not declaring it, they were surprised by a burst of light, and a flight of glittering streaks in it. And almost before these came down again, they saw that the murderous *cheval de frise* had a great gap in its centre. With a true British cheer, stirring every British heart, out they rushed from their shelter, and up the dark breach, and into Badajos!

One form, however, passed first into Badajos with undisputed precedence, because it hap-

pened to be close by, when the sword-blades rocketed away so. And not only that, but the act of that one had enabled the others to follow —an act of valour inspired by luck, and incited by bodily anguish.

It was thus. In the depth of that horrible pause and dejection of the assailants, Hilary, getting relieved of his cramp, rose slowly and stood in a sheltered spot, to recover himself before running away. Everything seemed much against him, so far as he could discover; and no one with a social turn was there to discuss the position.

Moreover, his wounds were beginning at once to sting him and to stiffen him—a clever arrangement made by nature to teach men not to fight so much. Nearly mad with pain—which is felt tenfold as much by quick-born Normans as by slow-born Dutchmen—he saw a shell fall and roll very kindly just between his dragging feet. It carried a very long fusee, sticking out of it, at a handsome curve, and steadily spluttering with fire, like the tail of a rat, when bad boys have ignited it.

"For better, for worse," cried Hilary, talking to himself, even in his agony, by the power of habit: "go into that hole, my friend, and do

your utmost there." So much had he been knocked about, that the shell (although a light one) was as much as he could stagger with; till he dropped it into a shelfy hole, which he had long been looking at, under the baulk of six-inch beam, into which the swords were rivetted. Then down he fell—whether from exhaustion or presence of mind he could never tell. Through the jags of the riven granite he heard the shell in a smothered way sputtering (like a "devil" in a wasp's nest), and then with a thunderous roar and whiz, and a rush through the air of wood, stone, and iron, the Frenchman's deadly bar was burst.

For a moment Lorraine was so stunned and shaken that all he could do was to stay on the ground; but the shock made one of his wounds bleed afresh, and this perhaps revived him. At any rate he arose, and feebly tottered in over the crest of the breach. The soldiers of the Forty-third and Fifty-second Regiments gave him a cheer as they ran up the steep, while on the part of the enemy not a weapon was levelled at him. This, however, was not from any admiration of his valour—though Frenchmen are often most chivalrous foes—but because

these heroic defenders at last were compelled to abandon the breaches. Being taken in the rear by the Fifth Division, which had forced its way in at San Vincente, knowing also that the castle had fallen, and seeing their main defence lie shattered, they retired through the town and across the bridge of the Guadiana.

And now it is an accursed truth that the men who had been such glorious heroes, such good brethren to one another, strong, and grand, and pitiful, turned themselves within half an hour into something lower than the beasts that perish. They proved that the worst of war is not bloodshed, agony, and slow death; not even trampled freedom, hatred, tyranny, and treachery. On that same night of heroism, patriotism, and grand devotion, the nicest and most amiable vice indulged by those very same heroes and devoted patriots, was swinish and wallowing drunkenness. Rapine, arson, fury, murder, and outrages unspeakable—even their own allies the Spaniards, glad to be quit of the French, and to welcome warmly these deliverers, found bitter cause, ere sunrise, to lament the British victory.

So it came to pass that young Lorraine, weak and weary, and vainly seeking a surgeon to bind up his wounds, was compelled to fight once more that night, before he could lay him down and rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHERRY SACK.

THERE would seem to be times, and scenes, and cases, in which human nature falls helpless under sudden contamination, a mental outbreak of black murrain, leprosy, or plague. A panic, a superstitious fervour, a patriotic or social rush, a rebellion, a "revival"—all of these drive men in masses, like swine down a precipice; but the sack of a large town bloodily stormed is more maddening than all the rest put together.

Even good and steady soldiers caught the taint of villany. They confessed (when their headaches began to get better) how thoroughly ashamed they were of themselves, for having been led into crime and debauch by the scamps and the scum of the regiment. Still, at the moment, they were as bad as, or even worse than consistent blackguards; because they had more strength to rush astray.

Hilary knew mankind very little, and only

from a gentleman's point of view; so that when he found, or lost, his way into the great square of the town, he was quite amazed, in his weak state of mind, by the scene he was breaking into. Here, by the light of a blazing bonfire, made of costly furniture, he descried Major Clumps of his regiment, more neatly than pleasantly attached to the front door of a large mansion. Across his breast and arms a couple of musket-straps were tightly strained and pegged with bayonets into the timber so firmly that this active officer could not even put foot to the ground. On his head was a very conspicuous fool's cap made of a copy of a proclamation, with that word in large type above his brows; while a gigantic grenadier, as tipsy as a fiddler, was zealously conducting the exhibition, by swinging him slowly to and fro, to the tune of Margery Daw, even as children swing each other on a farmyard gate. The Major's fury and the violence of his language may be imagined, but must not be reported. He had alway been famous for powers of swearing; but in this case he outdid himself, renewing (every moment) and redoubling the grins of all spectators.

"You shall swing for this," he screamed to

his showman, just as Hilary came up; "you shall swing for this, you," etc., etc.

"You shwing first, old cock, at any rate," the grenadier answered, with a graceful sweep of the door and the pendent major.

"Oh Lorraine, Lorraine," cried the latter, as the arc of his revolution brought him face to face with Hilary; "for heaven's sake, stop those miscreants—ah, you can do nothing, I see—you are hit badly, my poor boy."

"My friend," said Hilary to the grenadier, with that persuasive grace which even the costermongers could not resist; "you are much too good a soldier to make a laughing-stock of a brave British officer. I cannot attempt to use force with you, for you are lucky enough to be unwounded. Thank God for that, and release your prisoner—remember he is not a Frenchman, but a brave and good English major."

With these, and perhaps some more solid persuasions, he obtained the relief of his senior officer, who for some moments could scarcely speak, through excitement and exhaustion. But he made signs to Hilary that he had something to say of great importance, and presently led him into a narrow archway.

"There will be vile work done in that

house," he contrived at last to tell Hilary; "the men were bad enough at Rodrigo, but they will be ten times worse to-night. We are all so scattered about that no man has his own officer near him, and he don't care a button for any others. It was for trying to restrain some scoundrels of the Fifth Division that I was treated in that cursed way. Only think how we should feel, Lorraine, if our own daughters were exposed so!"

"I haven't got any daughters," said Hilary, groaning with pain, perhaps at the thought. "But I'd drive my sword through any man's heart—that is to say, if I had got any sword, or any arm to drive it with." His sword had been carried away by a grape shot, and his right arm hung loose in a cluster of blood; for he had nothing to bind it up with.

"You are a man, though a wounded man," the Major replied, being touched a little by Hilary's strength of expression, inasmuch as he had two nice pretty daughters, out of harm's way in England: "it is most unlucky that you are hit so hard."

"That is quite my own opinion. However, I can hold out a good bit, Major, for any work that requires no strength."

"Do you know where to find any of our own fellows? They would be quite ready to fight these blackguards; they are very sore about the way those scoundrels stole into the town. We have always been the foremost hitherto. Your legs are all right, I suppose, my boy."

"All right, except that I am a trifle light-headed, and that always flies to the legs—or at least we used to say so at Oxford."

"Never mind what you said at Oxford. Only mind what you say in Badajos. Collect every man you can find of ours. Tell him the Fifth are murdering, robbing, cheating us again, as they did by sneaking in at a corner, and insulting our best officers. Drunk, or sober, bring them all. The more our men drink, the more sober they get." It is likely enough that officers of the Fifth Division would have thought the same paradox of their own men.

"I cannot get along at my usual pace," said Hilary; "but I will do my best. But will not the mischief be done already?"

"I hope not. I asked Count Zamora, who seems to be the foremost man of the town, which he thought most of—his wine, or his daughters. And he answered of course as a

gentleman must. His cellars contain about 300 butts; it will take some time for our men to drink that. And I spread a report of their qualities, and a rumour that all the ladies had escaped. The night is hot. All the men will plunge into those vast cellars first. And when they come up, any sober man will be a match for twenty."

"What a pest that I am so knocked about!" cried Hilary, quite forgetting his pain, in the chivalry of his nature. "Major, if only for half-an-hour you can hold back the devilry, I will answer for the safety of the household. But beware of fire."

"You need not tell me about that, young man. I have seen this work before you were born. I shall pick up a cloak and berette, and cork my eyebrows, and be a Spaniard; major-domo, or whatever they call it. I can jabber the tongue a bit; enough to go down with English ears. I will be the steward of the cellars, and show them where the best wine is; and they don't know wine from brandy. And they will not know me, in their cups, till I order them all into custody. Be quick; there is no more time to lose."

Hilary saw that Major Clumps was going to

play a very dangerous part; for many of the men had their muskets loaded, and recked not at whom they fired them. However, there was nothing better for it; and so he set out upon his own errand, when he ought to have been in hospital.

At first he was very unfortunate, meeting no men of his own regiment, and few even of his own division; for most of them doubtless were busy in the houses, laying hold of everything. But after turning many corners, he luckily hit upon Corporal White of his own company, a very steady man, who knew the importance of keeping sober, at a time of noble plundering. This man was a martinet, in a humble way, but popular in the ranks in spite of that; and when he heard of the outrage to a major of his regiment, and his present danger; and knew that a rich Don's family was threatened by rascals of the Fifth Division,—he vowed that he would fetch a whole company to the rescue, ere a man could say "Jack Robinson."

"And now, sir," he said, "you are not able to go much further, or do any more. Round the corner there is a fountain of beautiful spring water, worth all the wines and spirits these fellows are disgracing of themselves with. Ah, I

wish I had a glass of good English ale—but that is neither here nor there. And for want of that a thirsty man may be glad of a drop of this water, sir. And when you have drunk, let it play on your arm. You have a nasty place, sir."

With these words he ran off; and Hilary, following his directions, enjoyed the greatest of all the mere bodily joys a man can be blessed with—the slaking of furious thirst with cold delicious crystal water. He drank, and drank, and sighed with rapture, and then began to laugh at himself; and yet must have another drink. And then for the moment he was so refreshed, that his wounds were not worth heeding.

"I will go and see what those villains are about," he said to himself and the pretty Saint Isidore (to whose pure statue bending over the gracious water he lifted hat, as a gentleman ought to do); "I have drank of your water, and thank you, Saint; though I have no idea what your name is. Our family was Catholic for five hundred years; and I don't know why we ever left it off."

"Rub-a-dub, dubbledy, dulluby-dub"—what vowels and dissonants can set forth the sound of

a very drunken drummer, set upon his mettle to drum on a drum, whose head he has been drinking from. Having no glasses, and having no time to study the art of sloping a bottle between the teeth with drainage, they truly had happened on a fine idea. They cracked the bottles on the rim of the drum, and put down their mouths and drank well of it. The drum was not so much the worse for this proceeding as they were, because they allowed no time for the liquor to soak into the greasy parchment; but as many as could stand round were there, and plenty of others came after them. So that the drumhead never once brimmed over, though so many dozens were cracked on it. No wonder, when such work was toward, that many a musket-shot rang along the firelit streets of Badajos, and many a brave man who had baffled the fury of the enemy fell dead in the midst of his frolicking.

Hilary felt that he had been shot enough, and to spare, already; and so, while slowly and painfully plodding his way back to the great square of the town, from corner to corner he worked a traverse, in shelter (wherever the shelter offered) of porch, or pier, or any other shadowy folds of the ancient streets. And thus, without

any more damage, he returned to the house of the Count of Zamora.

Here he found the main door closely fastened—by the fellows inside, no doubt, to keep their villanous work to themselves—and as the great bonfire was burning low, he thought that he might have mistaken the house, until with his left hand he felt the holes where the bayonets had pegged up the good major. And while he did this, a great roar from the cellars quickened his eagerness to get in.

"This is a nice thing," he said to himself; "the major inside, and no getting at him! Such a choleric man in the power of those scamps! And they cannot take him for a Spaniard long, for he is sure to use strong English. And not only Clumps, but the whole of the household at their will and pleasure!"

But even while calling in question his superior officer's self-control, he did not show himself possessed of very wonderful coolness. For hearing a rush as of many feet upward from the lower quarters, Hilary made the best of his way to the smouldering bonfire, and seized with his left hand—for his right was useless—a chunk of some fine wood too hard to burn (perhaps of the African black-wood, or the bread-fruit tree,

or brown cassia), and came back with it in a mighty fury, and tried to beat the door in. But the door was of ancient chestnut-wood, and at his best he could not have hurt it. So now, in his weakness, he knocked and knocked, and nobody even heard him.

"This is enough to wear any one out," he said to himself, in his poor condition—for the lower the state of a man is, the more he relapses upon his nature, and Hilary's nature was to talk to himself—"if I cannot get in, like this, I must do something or other, and get in some how."

This would have cost him little trouble in his usual strength and activity. For the tipsy rascals had left wide open a window within easy reach from the street to a man sound of limb and vigorous. But Lorraine, in his present condition, had no small pain and difficulty in making his way through the opening. This being done at last, he found himself in a dark passage floored with polished timber, upon which he slipped and fell.

"What an evil omen!" he cried, lightly—little imagining how true his words would prove—"to fall upon entering a strange house, even though it be by the window. However, I

am shaken more than hurt. Goodness knows I can't afford to bleed again."

Fastening again his loosened bandage—for he had bound his arm now with a handkerchief—he listened and heard a great noise moving somewhere in the distance. Nothing can be less satisfactory than to hear a great noise, and hearken very steadfastly for its meaning, yet not learn what it can be about, or even where it comes from. Hilary listened, and the noise seemed now to come from one way and then from another. For the old house was peopled with indolent echoes, lazily answering one another, from corner to corner of passages, like the clapping of hands at a banquet. Wherefore Lorraine, being puzzled, went onwards, as behoves a young Englishman. And herein instinct served him well,—at least as the luck of the moment seemed,—for it led him into the main hall, whence niches and arches seemed leading away anywhere and everywhere. Hilary here stopped short, and wondered. It was so different from an English house; and he could not tell whether he liked it or not. There was some light of wax, and some of oil, and some of spluttering torches stuck into anything that would hold them, throwing a fugitive gleam on the

floor, where the polish of the marble answered it. In other places there were breadths of shadow, wavering, jumping, and flickering.

"This is a queer sort of place," said Hilary; "what is the proper thing for me to do?"

The proper thing for him to do became all at once quite manifest; for a young girl suddenly sprang into the hall, like a hunted butterfly darting.

"They cannot catch me," she exclaimed in Spanish—"they are too slow, the intoxicated men. I may always laugh at them. Here I will let them have another chase."

Flitting in and out the shadows, as softly as if she were one of them, she stopped by the side of Hilary Lorraine, in a dark place, without seeing him. And he, without footfall, leaned back in a niche, and trembled at being so close to her. For a gleam of faint light glanced upon her, and suggested strange wild beauty. For the moment, Hilary could only see glittering abundance of loosened hair, a flash of dark eyes, and raiment quivering from the quick turn of the form inside. And then he heard short breath, sudden sighs, and the soothing sound of a figure settling from a great rush into quietude.

"This beats almost everything I ever knew,"

said he to himself, quite silently. "I can't help her. And she seems to want no help, so far as I can judge. I wonder who she is, and what she would be like by daylight?"

Before he could make up his mind what to do, in a matter beyond experience, a great shout arose in some upstair places, and a shriek or two, and a noise of trampling. "Holy Virgin! they have caught Camilla!" cried the young lady at Hilary's side. "She ought to have a little more of wisdom. Must I peril myself to protect her?" Without further halt to consider that question—swifter than the slow old lamps cast shadow, she rushed betwixt pillars, and up a stone stairway. And young Lorraine, with more pain than prudence, followed as fast as he could get along.

At the top of the stairs was a broad stone gallery, leading to the right and left, and lit as badly as a village street. But Hilary was not long in doubt, for he heard on the right hand a clashing noise, and soon descried broken shadows flitting, and felt that roguery was going on. So he made at his best pace towards it. And here he had not far to seek; for in a large room, hung with pictures, and likely to be too full of light, the fate of the house was

being settled. In spite of all drunken stupidity, and the time spent in the wine-cellars, the plunderers had found out the inmates, and meant to make prizes of war of them. Small wonder that British intervention was not considered a God-send, when our allies were treated so. But British soldiers, however brutal in the times gone by (especially after furious carnage had stirred the worst elements in a man, and ardent liquor fired them), still had one redeeming point, the national love of fair play and sport. They had stolen this Spanish gentleman's wines, burned his furniture in the square, and done their best to set his house on fire, as long as they thought that he skulked away. But now that they touched his dearer honour, and he came like a man to encounter them, something moved their tipsy hearts to know what he was made of.

Miguel de Montalvan, the Count of Zamora, was made of good stuff, as he ought to be, according to his lineage. He was fighting for his children's honour, and he knew how to use a rapier. Two wounded roysterers on the floor showed that, though his hair was white, his arm was not benumbed with age. And now, with his slender Toledo blade, he was holding his

own against the bayonet of his third antagonist, a man of twice his strength and weight—the very same tall grenadier who had pegged Major Clumps to the door of the house, and swung him so despitefully.

At the further end of the room two young and beautiful ladies stood or knelt, in horrible dread and anguish. It was clear at a glance that they were sisters, although they behaved very differently. For one was kneeling in a helpless manner, with streaming eyes, and strained hands clasping the feet of a marble crucifix. She had not the courage to look at the conflict, but started convulsively from her prayers at clash of steel or stamp of foot. The other stood firmly, with her hair thrown back, one hand laid on her sister's head, and the other grasping a weapon, her lips set hard and her pale cheeks rigid, while her black eyes never left the face of the man who was striking at her father. At the first glance Hilary knew her to be the brave girl who had escaped to the hall, and returned to share her sister's fate.

Things cannot be always done chivalrously, or in true heroic fashion. From among the legs of the reeling Britons (who, with pipes and bottles and shouts of applause, were watching

the central combat) Hilary snatched up with his left hand a good-sized wine-bag, roughly rent at the neck, but still containing a part of its precious charge. The rogues had discovered it in the cellar, and guessed that its contents were good. And now, as the owner of the house, hard pressed and unable to reach his long-armed foe, was forced to give way, with the point of the bayonet almost entering his breast, and bearing him back on his daughters, Lorraine, with a sweep of his left arm, brought the juicy bag down on the back of the head of the noble grenadier. At the blow, the rent opened and discharged a gallon of fine old crusted port and beeswing down the warrior's locks, and into his eyes, and the nape of his neck. Blinded with wine, and mad with passion, he rushed at his new assailant; but the Count, as he turned, passed his rapier neatly between the tendons of his right arm. Down fell his musket, and Hilary seized it, and pointed it at the owner's breast. And now the grenadier remembered what he had quite forgotten throughout his encounter with the Spaniard—his musket was loaded, and on the full cock! So he dropped (like a grebe or goosander diving), having seen smart practice with skirmishers.

However, it must have gone ill with Hilary, as well as the Count and his household, if succour had not come speedily. For the wassailers, who had shown wondrous temper—Mars being lulled on the lap of Bacchus—suddenly awoke, with equal reason, to wild fury. With much reviling, and condemnation of themselves and one another, they formed front (having discipline even in their cups), and bore down the long room upon the enemy.

Drunk as they were, this charge possessed so much of their accustomed weight and power, that the Don looked on all as lost, and could only stand in front of his daughters. But Hilary, with much presence of mind, faced them, as if he were in command, and cried, "Halt!" as their officer.

With one accord they halted, and some of them tumbled down in doing it; and before they could form for another charge, or mutiny against orders, Corporal White, with half a company of his famous regiment, took them in the rear, and smote right and left; and they fled with staggered consciences.

CHAPTER XIV.

BENEATH BRIGHT EYES.

As soon as the Count and his daughters knew how much they owed to Hilary, and saw the weak and wounded plight in which he had laboured for their good, without any loss of time they proved that Spaniards are not an ungrateful race. The Count took the young man in his arms, as well as he could without hurting him, and kissed him upon either cheek; and though the young ladies could not exactly follow their father's example, they made it clear that it was not want of emotion which deterred them. They kissed the left hand of the wounded youth, and bent over it, and looked at him with eyes so charming and so full of exquisite admiration, that Major Clumps, who was lying on the floor corded—and far worse, actually gagged—longed to rap out a great

oath; but failed in his struggle to break the commandment.

"Oh, he is so hurt, my father!" cried the braver, and if possible, the lovelier of the two fair maidens; "you do not heed such things, because you are so free yourself to wound. But the cavalier must be taken to bed. See, he is not capable now of standing!"

For Hilary, now that all danger was past, grew faint; while he scorned himself for doing so in the presence of the ladies.

"It is to death; it is to death!" exclaimed the timid damsel. "What shall we do? Oh holy saints! To save us, and to have slain himself!"

"Be tranquil, Camilla," said the Spanish gentleman, kindly, and without contempt. "You have not shown the spirit of our house; but we cannot help our natures. Claudia, you are as brave as a man; seek for the good woman Teresina; she has not run away like the rest; she must be hiding somewhere. Camilla, release that other brave senhor. Gentlemen all, pray allow us to pass."

Corporal White drew his men aside, while the Count, concealing his own slight wounds, led and supported young Lorraine through a

short passage, and into a bedroom, dark, and cool, and comfortable. Here he laid him to rest on a couch, and brought cold water, and sponged his face. And presently old Teresina came, and moaned, and invoked the Virgin a little, and then fell to and pulled all his clothes off, as if he were her daughter's baby. And Hilary laughed at her way of working, and soothing him like some little pet; so that he almost enjoyed the pain of the clotted places coming off.

For after all he had not received — like Brigadier Walker that hot evening — twenty-seven wounds of divers sorts; but only five, and two bad bruises, enough to divert the attention. If a man has only one place of his body to think about, and to be full of, he is scarcely better off than a gourmand, or a guest at a Lord Mayor's dinner. But if he finds himself peppered all over, his attention is not over-concentrated, and he finds a new pleasure in backing one hole of his body against another. In the time of the plague this thing was so; and so it must be in the times of war.

From the crown and climax of human misery Lorraine (by the grace of the Lord) was spared. No doctor was allowed to come

near him. That fatal step in the strongest man's life (the step tempting up to the doctor's bell), happily in his case was not trodden; for the British surgeons were doing their utmost at amputating dead men's legs; while Senhor Gines de Passamonte (the only Spanish graduate of medicine in good circles) had been roasted at one of the bonfires, to enable him to speak English. This was a well-meant operation, and proved by no means a fatal measure; the jack, however, revolved so well, that he went on no medical rounds for three months.

"Senhor, we can no doctor get," said the anxious Count to Hilary, having made up his mind to plunge into English, of which he had tried some private practice. "Senhor, what is now to do? I can no more speak to please."

"You can speak to please most nobly. I wish that I could speak the grand Hispanic tongue at all, sir."

"Senhor, you shall. So brave a gentleman never will find bad to teach. The fine Angles way of speaking is to me very strong and good; in one year, two year, three year, sir. Alas! I behold you laughing."

"Count, it was but a twinge of pain. You possess a great knowledge of my native tongue.

But I fear that after such a night as this you will care to cultivate it no more."

"From what cause? I have intelligence of you. But the thing has itself otherwise. The Angles are all very good. They incend my goods, and they intoxicate my wines. They are—what you call—well to come. They make battle with me for the Donnas, but fairly, very fairly; and with your valiant assistance I victor them. I have no complaint. Now I make adventure to say that you can speak the French tongue. I can do the very same affair, and so can my daughters two. But in this house it must not be. We will speak the Angles until you have intelligence of the Spanish. With your good indulgence, Senhor. Does that recommend itself to you?"

"Excellently, Count," said Hilary. And then, in spite of pain, he added, with his usual courtesy, "I have often longed to learn your magnificent language. This opportunity is delightful."

"I have, at this time, too prolonged," Don Miguel answered, with such a bow as only a Spaniard can make, and a Spaniard only when highly pleased; "sleep, sir, now. The good Teresina will sit always on your head."

The good Teresina could not speak a word of any tongue but her own, and in that she could do without any answers, if only she might make to herself as many as she pleased of them. She saw that Hilary had no bones broken, nor even a bullet in his body—so far as she could yet make out—but was sadly hacked about, and worn, and weak with drains of bleeding. Therefore what he wanted now was nourishment, cold swathes, and sleep; and all of these he obtained abundantly under the care of that good nurse.

Meanwhile, poor Major Clumps (to whom the Count and his daughters owed quite as much as they did to young Lorraine) did not by any means become the object of overpowering gratitude. He was neither wounded, nor picturesque; and his services, great as they were, had not been rendered in a striking manner. So that although he did his best—as most old officers are inclined to do—to get his deserts attended to, his reward (like theirs) was the unselfish pleasure of seeing inferior merit preferred.

"Of course," he cried, after a preface too powerful to have justice done to it—"of course this is what one must always expect. I get bruised, and battered, and laughed at, and

swung on a door, and gagged and corded, the moment I use a good English word; and then the girls for whose sake I did it, and turned myself into a filthy butler, because I am not a smart young coxcomb, and my wounds are black instead of being red, begad, sir, they treat me as if I had been all my life their father's butler!"

The loss of his laurels was all the more bitter to the brave and choleric Major, not only because it was always happening—which multiplied it into itself at every single recurrence—but also because he had been rapidly, even for his time of life, subdued by the tender and timorous glances of the sweet young Donna Camilla. The greater the fright this girl was in, the better it suited her appearance; and when she expected to be immolated (as the least of impending horrors), her face was as that of an angel. The Major, although trussed tight with whipcord, and full of an old stocking in his mouth, had enjoyed the privilege of gazing at her while she clasped her crucifix. And that picture would abide upon his retentive, stubborn, and honest brain as long as the brain itself abode. He loved an Angelical girl, because his late wife had been slightly Demoniac.

Now, by the time that our British soldiers had finished their sack of Badajos—which took them three days, though they did their best—and were beginning to be all laid up (in spite of their iron trim and training) by their own excesses, Lorraine was able to turn in his bed, and to pay a tender heed to things. He began to want some sort of change from the never-wearying, but sometimes wearisome, tendance of old Teresina, whose rugged face and pointed cap would dwell in his dreams for ever. Of course he was most grateful to her, and never would forget her kindness. Still he longed for a sight of somebody else; ugly or beautiful he cared not—only let it be some other face. And his wish was granted, as generally happened, and sometimes only too graciously.

Our very noble public schools and ancient universities know, and always have known, how to educate young people. From long experience, they are well aware that all languages are full of mischief; and a man who desires that element finds it almost wherever he pleases. So that our authorities did well to restrict themselves to the grand old form, and the distance of two thousand years. Hence, as a matter of course, poor Hilary had not learned, either

at school or college, even one irregular verb of the fine pervasive and persuasive language of all languages. To put it more simply, he could not speak French. In print he could follow it, off and on (as most men, with Latin to lead them, can); but from live lips it was gibberish to him, as even at this day it is to nine and a half out of ten good Britons.

And now, when suddenly a soft rich voice came over his shoulder (just turned once more in great disgust from the dreary door) and asked, in very good French indeed, "How do you carry yourself, sir?" Hilary was at a pinch to answer, "Most well, a thousand thanks, most well." And after this Anglo-Gallic triumph, he rolled on his bandages very politely (in spite of all orders to the contrary) to see who it was, and to look at her.

Even in the gloom of the shaded windows, and of his own enfeebled sight, he could not help receiving an impression of wondrous beauty —a beauty such as it is not good for any young man to gaze upon, unless he is of a purely steadfast heart, and of iron self-control. And Hilary was not of either of these, as himself and his best friends knew too well.

The Count of Zamora's younger daughter,

Claudia de Montalvan, was of Andalusian birth, and more than Andalusian beauty. Form, and bloom, and brilliant change, and harmony, and contrast, with the charm of soft expression, and the mysterious power of large black eyes—to all of these, in perfection, add the subtle grace of high lineage, and the warmth of southern nature, and it must be confessed that the fairest English maid, though present in all her beauty, would find a very dangerous rival.

"I quite forgot," said the senhorita, approaching the bed with most graceful movement, and fixing her radiant eyes on poor Hilary—"there is one thing, sir, that I quite forgot. My good father will not allow French to be spoken by any child of his. He is so patriotic! What a pity, since you speak French so well!"

Hilary took some time to make out this. Then, knowing how barbarous his accent was, he weakly endeavoured with his languid eyes to pierce the depth of the Spanish maiden's, and learn whether she were laughing at him. Neither then, nor afterwards, when his sight was as keen again as ever, did he succeed in penetrating the dark profundity of those bright eyes.

"How shall we manage it?" the young lady continued, dropping her long curved lashes,

and slightly flushing under his steadfast gaze. "You cannot speak the Spanish, I fear, not even so well as the droll old senhor, who makes us laugh so much down-stairs. On the contrary, I cannot speak the English. But, in spite of that, we must hold converse. Otherwise, how shall we ever thank you, and nurse you, and recover you? One thing must be begun at once—can I, without pain, lift your hand?"

Great part of this speech was dark to Hilary; but he understood the question about his hand, and kept the disabled one out of sight, and nodded, and said, "Oui, senhora." Whereupon, to his great surprise, beautiful Claudia fell on her knees by the side of the couch, caught his left hand in both of hers, and pressed it in the most rapturous manner, ever so many times, to her sweet cool lips. And a large tear, such as large eyes should shed, gently trickled on each fair cheek, but was cleverly kept from dripping on his hand, because he might not have liked it. And then, with her face not far from his, she looked at him with a long soft gaze, and her hair (with the gloss and the colour of a filbert over the Guadiana) fell from her snowy forehead forward; and Hilary was done for.

CHAPTER XV.

DONNAS PRAY AND PRACTISE.

A SAD and a sorry task it is to follow the lapse of a fine young fellow, from the straight line of truth and honour, into the crooked ways of shame. Hilary loved Mabel still, with all his better heart and soul; her pure and kind and playful glances, and the music of her true voice, never wholly departed from him. In the hot infatuation to which (like many wiser and older men) he could not help but yield himself, from time to time a sudden pang of remorse and of good love seized him. Keenly alive to manly honour, and to the goodness of womankind, he found himself playing false to both, and he hated himself when he thought of it. But the worst of him was that he did not think habitually and steadfastly; he talked to himself, and he thought of himself, but he very

seldom examined himself. He felt that he was a very good fellow, in the main, and meant no harm; and if he set up for a solid character, who would ever believe him? The world had always insisted upon it that he was only a trifler; and the world's opinion is very apt to create what it anticipates. He offered excuses enough to himself, as soon as he saw what a wrong he was doing. But the only excuse a good man can accept is the bitterness of his punishment.

The British army, having exhausted havock to the lees and dregs, marched upon its glorious way, in quest of other towns of our allies no less combustible. But many wounded champions were left behind in Badajos, quartered on the grateful townsmen, to recover (if they could) and rejoin as soon as possible. Lieutenant Lorraine was one of these, from the necessity of his case; and Major Clumps managed to be another, from his own necessities. But heavily wounded as he was (by one of Don Miguel's daughters), the fighting Major would never have got himself certified on the sick-list, unless he had known, from the course of the war, that no battle now was imminent.

Regardless of his Horace, and too regardful of cruel Glycera, more than too much pined

Major Clumps, and would have chanted mournful ditties in a minor key, if nature had only gifted him with any other note than D. Because his junior shone beyond him, with breach of loyal discipline. He might console himself, however, with the solace offered by the sprightly bard—the endless chain of love revolving with links on the wrong cog for ever. Major Clumps was in love with Camilla; the saintly Camilla declined from him with a tender slope towards Hilary; Hilary went downhill too fast with violent pangs towards Claudia; and Claudia rose at the back of the wheel, with her eyes on the distant mountains.

Of all Lorraine's pure bodily wounds, the worst (though not the most painful, as yet) was a gash in his left side, made by pike, or sword, or bayonet, or something of a hasty poignancy. Hilary could give no account of it, when he took it, or where, or how: he regretted deeply to have it there; but beyond that he knew nothing. It seemed to have been suggested cleverly, instead of coarsely slashing down; so far as a woman who had not spent her youth in dissecting-rooms could judge. But Major Clumps (too old a warrior

to lose his head to anything less perturbing than a cannon-ball) strenuously refused to believe in Hilary's ignorance about it. He had a bad opinion of young men, and believed that Hilary had fallen into some scrape of which he was now ashamed. At the same time, he took care to spread it abroad (for the honour of the regiment) that their young lieutenant had been the first to leap on the sword-blades of the breach, even as afterwards he was first to totter through the gap he made. But now it seemed likely that either claim would drop into abeyance, until raked up as a question of history.

For the wound in Hilary's side began to show very ugly tokens. It had seemed to be going on very nicely for about a fortnight; and Teresina praised and thanked the saints, and promised them ten days' wages, in the form of candles. But before her vow was due, or her money getting ready, the saints (whether making too sure of their candles, or having no faith in her promises) suddenly struck work, and left this good woman, rags, bottles, and bones, in a miserable way. For violent inflammation began to kindle beneath the bandages, and smiles were succeeded by sighs and moan-

ing, and happy sleep by weary tossings and light-headed wakefulness.

By way of encouraging the patient, Major Clumps came in one day with a pair of convalescent Britons, and a sheet of paper, and pressed upon him the urgent necessity for making his will; to leave the world with comfort and composure. Hilary smiled, through all his pain, at the thought of his having in the world anything but itself to leave; and then he contrived to say, pretty clearly—

"Major, I don't mean to leave the world. And if I must, I have nothing but my blessing to leave behind me."

"Then you do more harm than good by going; and none need wish to hurry you. Sergeant Williams, you may go, and so may Private Bodkin. You will get no beer in this house, I know; and you have both had wine enough already. Be off! what are you spying for?"

The two poor soldiers, who had looked forward to getting a trifle for their marks, glanced at one another sadly, and knowing what the Major was, made off. For ever since the tricks played with him by drunken fellows who knew him not, Major Clumps had been dreadful

towards every sober man of his own regiment. The course of justice never does run smooth.

This was a thing such as Hilary would have rejoiced to behold, and enter into, if he had been free from pain. But gnawing, wearing, worrying pain sadly dulls the sense of humour and power of observation. Yet even pain, and the fear of the grave, with nothing to leave behind him, could not rob him of all perception of a sudden brightness shed softly over all around. Two lovely maidens were come to pray for him, and to scatter his enemies.

Claudia de Montalvan led her gentle and beautiful sister Camilla, to thank, once for all, and perhaps to say farewell to, their preserver. Camilla, with her sad heart beating tremulously, yet controlled by maiden dignity and shame, followed shyly, fearing deeply that her eyes would tell their tale. And thus, even through the more brilliant beauty of her braver sister, the depth of love and pity made her, for the time, more beautiful. Between the two sisters there was but little, even for the most careful modeller to perceive, of difference. Each had the purely moulded forehead, and the perfect arch of eyebrow, and the large expressive eyes, well set and clearly cut and shaded; also the

other features shaped to the best of all nature's experience. This made it very nice to notice how distinct their faces were by inner difference of mind and will.

"Senhor," said Claudia to Major Clumps, who could manage to make out Spanish; "we have heard that he is very ill. We are come to do the best for him. Camilla will pray—it is so good—and I will do anything that may need. But it is not right to detain you longer. The gentlemen cannot pray at all, till they are in the holy orders."

The Major bowed, and grimly smiled at this polite dismissal; and then with a lingering glance at Camilla, stumped away in silence to a proper swearing distance.

His glance might have lingered till dark night fell, before that young Donna returned it. All her power of thought or feeling, fearing, hoping, or despairing, was gathered into one sad gaze at her guest, her saviour, and her love. Carefully as she had watched him through the time when there was no danger, she had not been allowed by the ancient nurse to come near him for the last three days. And even now she had been content to obey Teresina's orders, and to trust in the saints, with her calm sweet faith

—the saints who had sent this youth to save her—but for her stronger sister's will.

"Disturb him not, sister, but let him rest," said Claudia, whose fair bosom never was a prey to gratitude; "see you not how well he lies? If we should happen to cause disturbance, he might roll over, and break into bleeding; and then you could pray for his soul alone."

"Sister mine, you do not speak well," Camilla answered, gently; "he has shed so much blood for us, that he is not likely to bleed more. It is now the want of the blood, and the fever, that will make us mourn for ever. Cavalier, brave cavalier, can you not look up, and muse?"

Hilary, being thus invoked, though he had no idea what was meant—the language being pure Castilian—certainly did look up, and try with very bad success to muse. His eyes met kind Camilla's first (because she was leaning over him), but in spite of close resemblance, found not what they wanted in them, and wandered on, and met the eyes of Claudia, and rested there.

Camilla, with the speed of love outwinging all the wings of thought, felt, like a stab, this absence from her and this presence elsewhere.

And having plenty of inborn pride, as behoved her and became her well, she turned away to go, and leave her sister (who could not pray at all) to pray for what seemed to be more her own. And her heart was bitter, as she turned away.

Claudia (who cared not one half-real for Hilary, or what became of him; and who never prayed for herself, or told her beads, or did any religious thing) was also ready to go, with a mind relieved of a noxious duty; when her softer, and therefore nobler, sister came back, with her small pride conquered.

"It is not a time to dispute," she said, "nor even to give one's self to pray, when violent pain is tearing one. My sister, I have prayed for days, and twice as much by night; and yet everything grows much worse, alas! Last night I dreamed a dream of great strangeness. It may have come from my birthday saint. The good Teresina is having her dinner; and she always occupies one large hour in that consummation. Do a thing of courage, sister; you always are so rich in courage."

"What do you mean?" asked Claudia, smiling; "you seem to have all the courage now."

"Alas! I have no courage, Claudia. You

are laughing at me. But if you would only raise the bandage—I dare not touch the poor cavalier —where the sad inflammation is, that makes him look at you so—it is possible that I could, or perhaps that you could——"

"Could what?" asked Claudia, who was not of a long-enduring temper; "I have no fear to touch him; and he seems to be all bandages. There now, is that what you require?" Camilla shuddered as her sister firmly (as if she were unswathing a mummy of four thousand years) untied Teresina's knots, and laid bare the angry wound, which was eating Hilary's life away. Then a livid virulent gash appeared, banked with proud flesh upon either side, and Claudia could not look at it.

But Camilla gathered the courage often latent in true gentleness, and heeded only in her heart how the poor young fellow fell away and fainted from the bold exposure, and falling back, thus made his wound open and gape wider.

"I see it! I see it! I shall save him yet," she cried, in feminine ecstasy; and while Claudia thought her mad, she snatched from the chain at her zone a little steel implement, often carried by Spanish girls for beauty's sake. With dainty skimmings, and the lightest touch, she contrived

to get this well inside all the mere outward mischief, and drew out a splinter of rusty iron, and held it up to the light in triumph; and then she went down on her knees and sobbed, but still held fast her trophy.

"What is it? Let me see!" cried Claudia, being accustomed to take the lead: "Saint plague, what is a mere shred like that, to cause so much emotion? It may be something the old nurse put there, and so you have done more harm than good."

"Do nurses put pieces of jagged iron into a wound to heal it? It is part of a cruel Frenchman's sword. Behold the fangs of it, and the venomous rust! What agony to the poor cavalier! Now sponge his forehead with the vinegar; for you are the best and most welcome nurse. And when he revives show him this, and his courage will soon be renewed to him. I can stay here no longer, I feel so faint. I will go to my saint, and thank her."

When old Teresina returned, and found her patient looking up at Claudia, with his wound laid bare, she began to scold and wring her hands, and order her visitor out of the room; but the proud young lady would have none of that.

"A pretty nurse you are," she cried, "to leave this in your patient's wound! Is this your healing instrument, pray? What will the Count of Zamora say, when I show him this specimen of your skill? How long will he keep you in this house? Oh blind, demented, gorging, wallowing, and most despicable nurse!"

That last word she pronounced with such a bitterness of irony, that poor Teresina's portly form and well-fed cheeks shook violently. "For the love of all the saints, sweet Donna, do not let my lord know this. The marvellous power of your bright eyes has cast their light on everything. That poor old I, with these poor members, might have gazed and gazed for ever; when lo! the most beautiful and high-born lady under heaven appears, and saves the life of the handsome lord that loves her."

"We will speak no more upon this matter," Claudia answered, magnanimously. And the nurse thenceforth was ready to vow, and Hilary only too glad to believe, that the sorely wounded soldier owed his life to a beautiful maiden. And so he did; but not to Claudia.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNWELCOME ESCORT.

ALONG the northern brow and bend of the Sussex hills, the winter lingers, and the spring wakes slowly. The children of the southern slope, towards Worthing and West Tarring, have made their cowslip balls, and pranked their hats and hair with blue-bells, before their little northern cousins have begun to nurse and talk to, and then pull to pieces, their cuckoo-pint, and potentilla, dead-nettle, and meadow crowfoot.

The daffodil that comes and "takes the winds of March with beauty," here reserves that charming capture for the early breeze of May; for still the "black-thorn winter" buffets the folds of chilly April's cloak, and the hail-fringed mantle of wan sunlight. This is the time when a man may say, "Hurrah!

Here is summer come at last, I verily do believe. For goodness' sake, wife, give us air, and take those hot things from the children's necks. If you want me, I shall be in the bower, having a jolly pipe at last." And then by the time all the windows are open, and the little ones are proud to show their necks and the scratches of their pins, in rushes papa, with his coat buttoned over, and his pipe put out by hail.

None the less for all that, the people who like to see things moving—though it be but slowly—have opportunity now of watching small delights that do them good. How trees, and shrubs, and plants, and even earth and stone, begin to feel the difference coming over them. How little points, all black one day, and as hard as the tip of a rook's bill the next time of looking at them, show a little veiny shining. And then as the people come home from church, and are in their most observant humour, after long confinement, a little child finds a real leaf (most likely of an elder-tree), and many young faces crowd around it; while the old men, having seen too many springs, plod on and doubt this for a bad one.

Much of this had been done, with slow advance from Sunday to Sunday, and the hedges began to be feathered with green, and the meadows to tuft where the good stuff lay, and the corn in the gloss of the sun to glisten; when everybody came out of church one Sunday before Pentecost. The church was that which belonged to the Rev. Struan Hales (in his own opinion), and so did the congregation, and so did everything, except the sermon. And now the rector remained in the vestry, with his favourite daughter Cecil, to help him off with his "academicals," and to put away his comb.

"I hope your mother will be quick, my dear," said the Parson, stooping his broad shoulders, as his daughter tugged at him; "she cannot walk as she used, you know; and for the last half-hour I have been shuddering and trembling about our first fore-quarter."

"I saw that you were uncomfortable, papa, just as you were giving out your text. You seemed to smell something burning, didn't you?"

"Exactly!" said the Rector, gazing with surprise at his clever and queer Cecil. "Now how could you tell? I am sure I hope none

of the congregation were up to it. But 9*d.* a pound is no joke for the father of three hungry daughters."

"And with a good appetite of his own, papa. Well, I'll tell you how I knew it. You have a peculiar way of lifting your nose when the meat is too near the fire, as it always is with our new cook; and then you looked out of that round-arched window, as if you expected to see some smoke."

"Lift my nose, indeed!" answered the Rector; "I shall lift something else; I shall lift your lips, if you laugh at your poor old father so. And I never shaved this morning, because of Sir Remnant's dinner-party to-morrow. There, what do you think of that, Miss Impudence?"

"Oh papa, what a shameful beard! You preached about the stubble being all burned up; perhaps because you were thinking of our lamb. But I do declare you have got as much left as Farmer Gate's very largest field. But talking about Sir Remnant, did you see who skulked into church in the middle of the anthem and sate behind the gallery pillar, in one of the labourers' free seats?"

"No, I did not. You ought to be ashamed

of looking about in church so, Cecil. Nothing escapes you, except the practical application of my doctrine."

"Well, papa, now, you must have been stupid, or had your whole mind upon our new cook, if you didn't see Captain Chapman!"

"Captain Chapman!" cried the Rector, with something which in any other place would have been profane; "why, what in the world could he want here? He never came to hear me; that's certain."

"No, papa; nor to hear anything at all. He came to stare at poor Alice all the time; and to plague her with his escort home, I fear."

"The poor child, with that ungodly scamp! Who were in the servants' pew? I know pretty well; but you are sure to know better."

"Oh, not even one of the trusty people. Neither the old butler, nor Mrs. Pipkins, nor even Mrs. Merryjack. Only that conceited 'Mister Trotman,' as he calls himself, and his 'under-footman,' as he calls the lad; and three or four flirty housemaids."

"A guinea will send them all round the other way; and then he will pester Alice all the

way back. Run home, that's a dear, you are very quick of foot; and put the lamb back yourself nine inches; and tell Jem to saddle Maggie quick as lightning, and put my hunting-crop at the green gate, and have Maggie there; and let your mother know that sudden business calls me away to Coombe Lorraine."

"Why, papa, you quite frighten me! As if Alice could not take care of herself!"

"I have seen more of the world than you have, child. Do as I order you, and don't argue. Stop, take the meadow way, to save making any stir in the village. I shall walk slowly, and be at the gate by the time you have the pony there."

Cecil Hales, without another word, went out of the vestry door to a stile leading from the churchyard into a meadow, and thence by an easy gap in a hedge she got into the rectory shubbery.

"Just my luck," said the Rector to himself, as he took to the rambling village-street, to show himself as usual. "The two things I hate most are a row, and the ruin of a good dinner. Hashes and cold meat ever since Wednesday; and now when a real good joint is browning—oh, confound it all!—I quite forgot the asparagus

—the first I have cut, and as thick as my thumb! Now if I only had Mabel Lovejoy here! I do hope they'll have the sense not to put it on; but I can't very well tell Jem about it; it will look so mollyish. Can I send a note in? Yes, I can. The fellow can't read; that is one great comfort."

No sooner said than done; he tore out the fly-leaf of his sermon, and under his text, inculcating the duty of Christian vigilance, wrote in pencil, "Whatever you do, don't put on the asparagus."

This he committed to the care of Jem; and then grasping his hunting-whip steadfastly, he rode up the lane, with Maggie neighing at this unaccustomed excursion. For horses know Sunday as well as men do, and a great deal better.

Struan Hales was a somewhat headlong man; as most men of kind heart, and quick but not very large understanding, are apt to be. Like most people of strong prejudices, he was also of strong impulses; for the lowest form of prejudice is not common—the abstract one, and the negative. His common sense and his knowledge of the world might have assured him that Captain Chapman would do nothing to hurt or

even to offend young Alice. And yet, because he regarded Stephen with inveterate dislike, he really did for the moment believe it his duty thus to ride after him.

Meanwhile the gallant and elegant captain had done at least one thing according to the Rector's anticipation. By laying a guinea in Trotman's palm, he had sent all the servants home over the hill, and thus secured for himself a private walk with his charmer along the lane that winds so prettily under the high land. Now his dress was enough to win the heart of any rustic damsel, and as he passed the cottage-doors, all the children said, "Oh my!" This pleased him greatly, and could not have added less than an inch to his stature and less than a pound to the weight of his heel at each strut. This proves that he was not a thorough villain; for thorough villains attach no importance to the opinion of children.

Unaware of the enemy in advance, Alice walked through the little village, with her aunt and two cousins, as usual; and she said "Good-bye" to them at the rectory gate; knowing that they wanted to please her uncle with his early Sunday dinner. Country parsons, unless they are of a highly distinguished order, like to dine

at half-past one very punctually on a Sunday. Throughout the week (when they shoot or fish or ride to hounds, etc.) they manage to retard their hunger to five, or even six o'clock. On Sunday it is healthily otherwise. A sinking feeling begins to set in, about half-way through the sermon. And why? In an eloquent period, the parson looks round, to infect his congregation. He forgets for the moment that he is but a unit, while his hearers are an hundredfold. What happens? All humanity is, at eloquent moments, contagious, sensitive, impressible. A hundred people in the church have got their dinner coming on at one o'clock; they are thinking of it, they are dwelling on the subject; and the hundred and first, the parson himself (without knowing it, very likely, and even while seven heavens above it) receives the recoil of his own emotions, in epidemic appetite.

That may be all wrong of course, even unsacerdotal, or unscientific (until the subject is tabulated); but facts have large bones; and the fact stands thus. Alice Lorraine was aware of it, though without any scent of the reason; so she kissed her aunt and cousins two—Cecil being (as hath been seen) in clerical attendance—and lightly went her homeward way. She stopped

for a minute at Nanny Stilgoe's, to receive the usual grumbling sauced with the inevitable ingratitude. And then, supposing the servants to be no very great distance before her, she took to the lonely Ashwood lane, with a quick light step, as usual.

Presently she came to a place where the lane dipped suddenly into the hollow of a dry old watercourse—the course of the Woeburn, according to tradition, if anybody could believe it. There was now not a thread of open water; but a little dampness, and a crust of mud, as if some underground duct were anxious to maintain user of its right of way. By the side of the lane, an old oak-trunk (stretched high above the dip, and furnished with a broken handrail) showed that there must have been something to cross; though nobody now could remember it. In this hollow lurked the captain, placid and self-contented, and regarding with much apparent zest a little tuft of forget-me-not.

Alice, though startled for a moment by this unexpected encounter, could not help smiling at the ill-matched brilliance of her suitor's apparel. He looked like a smaller but far more costly edition of Mr. Bottler, except that his waistcoat was of crimson taffety, with a rolling collar of

lace; and instead of white stockings, he displayed gold-buttoned vamplets of orange velvet. Being loath to afford him the encouragement of a smile, the young lady turned away her face as she bowed, and with no other salutation continued her homeward course, at a pace which certainly was not slower. But Stephen Chapman came forth, and met her with that peculiar gaze which would have been insolent from a more powerful man, but as proceeding from a little dandy bore rather the impress of impudence.

"Miss Lorraine, you will not refuse me the honour of escorting you to your home. This road is lonely. There still are highwaymen. One was on the Brighton road last week. I took the liberty of thinking, or rather, perhaps, I should say of hoping, that you might not altogether object to a military escort."

"Thank you," said Alice; "you are very kind; but I have not the least fear; and our servants are not very far away, I know. They have orders to keep near me."

"They must have mistaken your route, I think. I am rather famous for long sight; and I saw the Lorraine livery just now going up the footpath that crosses the hill."

Alice was much perplexed at this. She by no means enjoyed the prospect of a long and secluded walk in the company of this gallant officer. And yet her courage would not allow her to retrace her steps, and cross the hill; neither could she well affront him so; for much as she disliked this man, she must treat him as any other lady would.

"I am much obliged to you, Captain Chapman," she answered as graciously as she could; "but really no kind of escort is wanted, either military or civilian, in a quiet country road like this, where everybody knows me. And perhaps it will be more convenient for you to call on my father in the afternoon. He is always glad when you can stay to dinner."

"No, thank you; I must dine at home to-day. I wish to see Sir Roland this morning, if I may. And surely I may accompany you on your way home; now, may I not?"

"Oh yes," she answered with a little sigh, as there seemed to be no help for it; but she determined to make the captain walk at a speed which should be quite a novelty to him.

"Dear me, Miss Lorraine! I had no idea that you were such a walker. Why, this must be what we call in the army 'double-quick' march' almost. Too fast almost to keep the ranks unbroken, when we charge the enemy."

"How very dreadful!" cried Alice, with a little grimace, which greatly charmed the captain. "May I ask you one particular favour?"

"You can ask none," he replied, with his hand laid on his crimson waistcoat; "or to put it more clearly, to ask a favour, is to confer a greater one."

"How very kind you are! You know that my dear brother Hilary is in the thick of very, very sad fighting. And I thought that perhaps you would not mind (as a military escort), describing exactly how you felt when first you charged the enemy."

"The deuce must be in the girl," thought the Captain; "and yet she looks so innocent. It can be only an accident. But she is too sharp to be romanced with."

"Miss Lorraine," he answered, "I belonged to the Guards; whose duty lies principally at home. I have never been in action."

"Oh, I understand; then you do not know what a sad thing real fighting is. Poor Hilary! We are most anxious about him. We have seen his name in the despatches; and we know that he was wounded. But neither he, nor Major Clumps (a brave officer in his regiment) has sent us a line since it happened."

"He was first through the breach at Badajos. He has covered himself with glory."

"We know it," said Alice, with tears in her eyes; and for a moment she liked the Captain. "But if he has covered himself with wounds, what is the good of the glory?"

"A most sensible question," Chapman answered, and fell once more to zero in the opinion of his charmer. With all the contempt that can be expressed by silence, when speech is expected, she kept on so briskly towards Bonny's castle, that her suitor (who, in spite of all martial bearing, walked in the manner of a pigeon) became hard set to keep up with her.

"The view from this spot is so lovely," he said, "I must really beg you to sit down a little. Surely we need not be in such a hurry."

"The air is chilly, and I must not loiter.

My father has a bad headache to-day. That was the reason he was not at church."

"Then surely he can be in no hurry for his luncheon. I have so many things to say to you. And you really give me quite a pain in my side."

"Oh, I am so sorry! I beg your pardon. I never could have thought that I was doing that. Rest a little, and you will be better."

The complaint would have been as a joke passed over, if it had come from anybody else. But she knew that the Captain was not strong in his lungs, or his heart, or anything; therefore she allowed him to sit down, while she stood and gazed back through the Ashwood lane, fringed, and arched, and dappled by the fluttering approach of spring.

"The beautiful gazing at the beautiful!" said Chapman, with his eyes so fixed as to receive his view of the landscape (if at all) by deputy. And truly his judgment was correct. For Alice, now in perfect health, with all the grace of young vigour and the charm of natural quickness, and a lovely face, and calm eyes beaming, not with the bright uncertain blue (that flashing charm of poor Hilary), but the grand ash-coloured grey—the tint that deepens

with the depth of life, and holds more love than any other—Alice, in a word, was something for a man to look at. The greatest man that ever was born of a woman, and knew what women are, as well as what a man is; the only one who ever combined the knowledge of both sexes; the one true poet of all ages (compared with whom all other poets are but shallow surfacers), Nature's most loving and best-loved child,—even he would have looked at Alice, with those large sad loving eyes, and found her good to dwell upon.

The Captain (though he bore the name of a great and grossly neglected poet) had not in him so much as half a pennyweight of poetry. He looked upon Alice as a handsome girl, of good birth and good abilities, who might redeem him from his evil ways, and foster him, and make much of him. He knew that she was far above him, "in mind, and views, and all that sort of thing;" and he liked her all the more for that, because it would save him trouble.

"Do let me say a few words to you," he began, with his most seductive and insinuating glance (for he really had fine eyes, as many weak and wanton people have); "you are apt

to be hard on me, Miss Lorraine, while all the time my first desire is to please, and serve, and gratify you."

"You are very kind, I am sure, Captain Chapman. I don't know what I have done to deserve it."

"Alas!" he answered with a sigh, which relieved him, because he was much pinched in, as well as a good deal out of breath, for his stays were tighter than the maiden's. "Alas! Is it possible that you have not seen the misery you have caused me?"

"Yes, I know that I have been very rude. I have walked too fast for you. I beg your pardon, Captain Chapman. I will not do so any more."

"I did not mean that; I assure you, I didn't. I would climb the Andes or the Himalayas only to win one smile from you."

"I fear that I should smile many times," said Alice, now smiling wickedly; "if I could only have a telescope—still I should be so sorry for you. They are much worse than the South-down hills."

"There, you are laughing at me again! You are so clever, Miss Lorraine; you give me no chance to say anything."

"I am not clever; I am very stupid. And you always say more than I do."

"Well, of course—of course I do; until you come to know me. After that, I always listen; because the ladies have more to say. And they say it so much better."

"Is that so?" said Alice, thinking, while the Captain showed his waist, as he arose and shook himself, "it may be so: he may be right; he seems to have some very good ideas." He saw that she thought more kindly of him; and that his proper course with her was to play humility. He had never known what pure love was; he had lessened his small capacity for it, by his loose and wicked life; but in spite of all that, for the first time Alice began to inspire him with it. This is a grand revolution in the mind, or the heart, of a "man of pleasure;" the result may save him even yet (if a purer nature master him) from that deadliest foe, himself. And the best (or the worst of it) is, that if a kind, and fresh, and warm, and lofty-minded girl believes herself to have gained any power of doing good in the body of some low reprobate, sweet interest, Christian hankerings, and the feminine love of paradoxes, succeed the legitimate disgust. Alice, however, was not of

a weak, impulsive, and slavish nature. And she wholly disdained this Stephen Chapman.

"Now, I hope that you will not hurry yourself," she said to the pensive captain; "the real hill begins as soon as we are round the corner. I must walk fast, because my father will be looking out for me. Perhaps, if you kindly are coming to our house, you would like to come more at your leisure, sir."

Stephen Chapman looked at her—not as he used to look, as if she were only a pretty girl to him—but with some new feeling, quite as if he were afraid to answer her. His dull, besotted, and dissolute manner of regarding women lay for the moment under a shock; and he wondered what he was about. And none of his stock speeches came to help him—or to hurt him—until Alice was round the corner.

"Holloa, Chapman! what are you about? Why, you look like one of Bottler's pigs, when they run about with their throats cut! Where is my niece? What have you been doing?" The Rector drew up his pony sharply; and was ready to seize poor Stephen by the throat.

"You need not be in such a hurry, parson," said Captain Chapman, recovering himself,

"Miss Lorraine is going up the hill a great deal faster than I can go."

"I know what a dissolute dog you are," cried the Parson, smoking with indignation at having spoiled his Sunday dinner, and made a scene, for nothing. "You forced me to ride after you, sir. What do you mean by this sort of thing?"

"Mr. Hales, I have no idea what you mean. You seem to be much excited. Pray oblige me with the reason."

"The reason, indeed! when I know what you are! Two nice good girls, as ever lived, you have stolen out of my gallery, sir; and covered my parish with shame, sir. And are you fit to come near my niece? I have not told Sir Roland of it, only for your father's sake; but now I will tell him, and quiet as he is, how long do you suppose he will be in kicking you down the Coombe, sir?"

"Come, now," said Stephen, having long been proof against righteous indignation; "you must be well aware, Rector, that the whole of that ancient scandal was scattered to the winds, and I emerged quite blameless."

"Indeed, I know nothing of the sort. You did what money could do—however, it is some time back; and perhaps I had better have let

an old story—Camerina—eh, what is it? On the other hand, if only——"

"Rector, you always mean aright, though you may be sometimes ungenerous. In your magnificent sermon to-day what did you say? Why, you said distinctly, in a voice that came all round the pillars—there is mercy for him that repenteth."

"To be sure I did, and I meant it too; but I meant mercy up above, not in my own parish, Stephen. I can't have any mercy in my own parish."

"Let us say no more about it, sir; I am not a very young man now, and my great desire is to settle down. I now have the honour of loving your niece, as I never loved any one before. And I put it to you in a manly way, and as one of my father's most valued friends, whether you have anything to say against it?"

"You mean to say that you really want to settle down with Alice! A girl of half your age and ten times your power of life! Come, Stephen!"

"Well, sir, I know that I am not in as vigorous health as you are. You will walk me down, no doubt, when we come to shoot together on my father's land; but still, all I want is a little

repose, and country life, and hunting; a little less of the clubs, and high play, and the company of the P.R. who makes us pay so hard for his friendship. I wish to leave all these bad things—once for all to shake them off—and to get a good wife to keep me straight, until my dear father drops off at last. And the moment I marry I shall start a new hunt, and cut out poor Lord Unicorn, who does not know a fox-hound from a beagle. This country is most shamefully hunted now."

"It is, my dear Stephen; it is, indeed. It puts me to the blush every time I go out. Really there is good sense in what you say. There is plenty of room for another pack; and I think I could give you some sound advice."

"I should act entirely, sir, by your opinion. Horses I understand pretty well: but as to hounds, I should never pretend to hold a candle to my Uncle Hales."

"Ah, my dear boy, I could soon show you the proper way to go to work. The stamp of dog we want is something of this kind——"

The Rector leaned over Maggie's neck, and took the Captain by the button-hole, and fondly inditing of so good a matter, he delivered a discourse which was too learned and confidential

to be reported rashly. And Stephen hearkened so well and wisely, that Mr. Hales formed a better opinion than he ever before had held of him, and began to doubt whether it might not be a sensible plan in such times as these, to close the ranks of the sober thinkers and knit together all well-affected, stanch, and loyal interests, by an alliance between the two chief houses of the neighbourhood—the one of long lineage, and the other of broad lands; and this would be all the more needful now, if Hilary was to make a mere love-match.

But in spite of all wisdom, Mr. Hales was full of strong warm feelings: and loving his niece as he did, and despising in his true heart Stephen Chapman, and having small faith in converted rakes, he resolved to be neutral for the present; and so rode home to his dinner.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN AMONG THE BIG-WIGS.

If any man has any people who ought to care about him, and is not sure how far they exert their minds in his direction, to bring the matter to the mark, let him keep deep silence when he is known to be in danger. The test, as human nature goes, is perhaps a trifle hazardous, at any rate when tried against that existence of the wiry order which is called the masculine; but against the softer and better portion of the human race—the kinder half—whose beauty is the absence of stern reason, this bitter test (if strongly urged) is sure to fetch out something; at least, of course, if no suspicion arises of a touchstone. Wherefore now there were three persons, all of the better sex, in much discomfort about Hilary.

Of these, the first was his excellent grand-

mother, Lady Valeria Lorraine, whose mind (though fortified with Plowden, and even the strong Fortescue) was much amiss about his being dead, and perhaps "incremated," leaving for evidence not even circumstantial ashes. Proof of this, however invalid, would have caused her great distress—for she really loved and was proud of the youth; but the absence of proof, and the probability of its perpetual absence (for to prove a man dead is to prove a negative, according to recent philosophers), as well as the prospect of complications after the simplest solution, kept this admirable lady's ever active mind in more activity than was good for it.

The second of the three who fretted with anxiety and fear, was Hilary's young sister Alice. Proud as she was of birth, and position, and spotless honour, and all good things, her brother's life was more precious to her than any of those worldly matters. She knew that he was rash and headlong, too good-natured, and even childish, when compared with men of the world. But she loved him all the more for that; and being herself of a stronger will, had grown (without any sense thereof) into a needful championship and vigilance for his good repute.

And this, of course, endeared him more, and made her regard him as a martyr, sinned against, but sinless.

But of all these three the third was the saddest, and most hard to deal with. Faith in Providence supports the sister, or even the mother of a man—whenever there is fair play for it—but it seems to have no *locus standi* in the heart of his sweetheart. That delicate young apparatus (always moving up and down, and as variable as the dewpoint) is ever ready to do its best, and tells itself so, and consoles itself, and then from reason quoted wholesale, breaks into petty unassorted samples of absurdity.

In this condition, without a dream of jealousy or disloyalty, Mabel Lovejoy waited long, and wondered, hoped, despaired, and fretted; and then worked hard, and hoped again. She had no one to trust her troubles to, no cheerful and consoling voice to argue and grow angry with, and prove against it how absurd it was to speak of comfort; and yet to be imbibing comfort, even while resenting it. Her mother would not say a word, although she often longed to speak, because she thought it wise and kind to let the matter die away. While Hilary was

present, or at any rate in England, Mrs. Lovejoy had yielded to the romance of these young doings; but now that he was far away, and likely in every weekly journal to be returned as killed and buried, the Kentish dame, as a sensible woman, preferred the charm of a bird in hand.

Of these there were at least half-a-dozen ensnared and ready to be caged for life, if Mabel would only have them; and two of them could not be persuaded that her nay meant anything; for one possessed the mother's yea, and the other that of the father.

The suitor favoured by Mrs. Lovejoy was a young physician at Maidstone, Dr. Daniel Calvert, a man of good birth and connections, and having prospects of good fortune. The Grower, on the other hand, had now found out the very son-in-law he wanted—Elias Jenkins, a steady young fellow, the son of a maltster at Sevenoaks, who had bought all the barley of Old Applewood farm for forty years and upwards. Elias was terribly smitten with Mabel, and suddenly found quite a vigorous joy in the planting and pruning of fruit-trees, and rode over almost every day, throughout both March and April, to take lessons, as he said, in grafting

and training pears, and planting cherries, and various other branches of the gentle craft of gardening. Of course the Grower could do no less than offer him dinner, at every visit, in spite of Mrs. Lovejoy's frowns; and Elias, with a smiling face and blushing cheeks, would bring his chair as close as he could to Mabel's, and do his best in a hearty way to make himself agreeable. And in this he succeeded so far, that his angel did not in the least dislike him; but to think of him twice, after Hilary, was such an insult to all intelligence! The maiden would have liked the maltster a great deal better than she did, if only he would have dropped his practice of "popping the question" before he left every Saturday afternoon. But he knew that Sunday is a dangerous day; and as he could not well come grafting then, he thought it safer to keep a place in her thoughts until the Monday.

"Try her again, lad," the Grower used to say. "Odds, bobs, my boy, don't run away from her. Young gals must be watched for, and caught on the hop. If they won't say 'yes' before dinner, have at them again in the afternoon, and get them into the meadows, and then go on again after supper-time. Some take the courting kindest of a morning,

and some at meal-time, and some by the moonlight."

"Well, sir, I have tried her in all sorts of ways, and she won't say 'yes' to one of them. I begin to be tired of Saturdays now. I have a great mind to try of a Friday."

"Ay!" cried the Grower, looking at him, as the author of a great discovery. "Sure enough now, try on Fridays—market-day, as I am a man!"

"Well now, to think of that!" said Elias; "what a fool I must have been, to keep on so with Saturday! The mistress goes against me, I know; and that always tells up with the maidens. But I must have something settled, squire, before next malting season."

"You shall, you shall indeed, my lad; you may take my word for it. That only stands to reason. Shilly-shally is a game I hate; and no daughter of mine shall play at it. But I blame you more than her, my boy. You don't know how to manage them. Take them by the horns. There is nothing like taking them by the horns, you know."

"Yes, to be sure; if one only knew the proper way to do it, sir. But missie slips away so quick like; I never can get hold of

her. And then the mistress has that fellow Calvert over here, almost every Sunday."

"Aha!" cried the Grower, with a knowing wink, "that is her little game, is it now? That is why she has aches and pains, and such a very sad want of tone, and failure of power in her leaders! Leave it to me, lad—that you may—I'll soon put a stop to that. A pill-grinder at Applewood farm indeed! But I did not know you was jealous!"

"Jealous! No, no, sir; I scorn the action. But when there are two, you know, why, it makes it not half so nice for one, you know."

Squire Lovejoy, however, soon discovered that he had been a little too confident in pledging himself to keep the maltster's rival off the premises. For Mrs. Lovejoy, being a very resolute woman in a little way, at once began to ache all over, and so effectually to groan, that instead of having the doctor once a-week, she was obliged to have him at least three times. And it was not very long before the young physician's advice was sought for a still more interesting patient.

For the daughter and prime delight of the house, the bright sweet-tempered Mabel, instead of freshening with the spring, and

budding with new roses, began to get pale, and thin, and listless, and to want continually to go to church, and not to care about her dinner. Her eagerness for divine service, however, could only be gratified on Sundays: for the practice of reading the prayers to the pillars twelve times a-week was not yet in vogue. The novelty, therefore, of Mabel's desire made the symptom all the more alarming; and her father perceived that so strange a case called peremptorily for medical advice. But she, for a long time, did nothing but quote against himself his own opinion of the professors of the healing art; while she stoutly denied the existence on her part of any kind of malady. And so, for a while, she escaped the doctor.

Meanwhile she was fighting very bravely with deep anxiety and long suspense. And the struggle was the more forlorn, and wearisome, and low-hearted, because she must battle it out in silence, with none to sympathize, and (worse than that) with everybody condemning her mutely for the conflict. Her father had a true and hearty liking for young Lorraine, preferring him greatly—so far as mere feeling went—to the maltster. But his views for his

daughter were different, and he thought it high time that her folly should pass. Her mother, on the other hand, would have rejoiced to see her the wife of Hilary; but had long made up her mind that he would never return alive from Spain, and that Mabel might lose the best years of her life in waiting for a doomed soldier. Gregory Lovejoy alone was likely to side with his sister, for the sake of Lorraine, the friend whom he admired so much; and Gregory had transmitted to her sweet little messages and loving words, till the date of the capture of Badajos. But this one consoler and loyal friend was far away from her all this time, having steadfastly eaten his way to the Bar, and received his lofty vocation. Thereupon Lovejoy paid five guineas for his wig, and a guinea for the box thereof, gave a frugal but pleasant "call party," and being no way ashamed of his native county, or his father's place therein, sturdily shouldered the ungrateful duties of "junior," on the home-circuit. Of course he did not expect a brief, until his round was trodden well; but he never failed to be in court; and his pleasant temper and obliging ways soon began to win him friends. His mother was delighted with all

this; but the franklin grumbled heavily at the bags he had to fill with money, to be scattered, as he verily believed, among the senior lawyers.

Now the summer assizes were held at Maidstone about the beginning of July; and Gregory had sent word from London, by John Shorne, that he must be there, and would spend one night at home, if his father would send a horse for him, by the time when his duties were over. His duties of the day consisted mainly in catering for the bar-mess, and attending diligently thereto; and now he saw the wisdom of the rule which makes a due course of feeding essential to the legal aspirant. A hundred examinations would never have qualified him for the bar-mess: whereas a long series of Temple dinners had taught him most thoroughly what to avoid.

The Grower was filled with vast delight at the idea of marching into court, and saying to all the best people of the town, "Pray allow me to pass, sir. My son is here somewhere, I believe. A fresh-coloured barrister, if you please, ma'am, with curly hair below his wig. Ah yes, there he is! But his lordship is whispering to him, I see; I must not inter-

rupt them." And therefore, although his time might be worth a crown an hour, ere his son's fetched a penny, he strove in vain against the temptation to go over and look at Gregory. Before breakfast he fidgeted over his fields, and was up for being down upon every one—just to let them know that this sort of talent is hereditary. His workmen winked at one another and said (as soon as he was gone by) that he must have got out the wrong side of the bed, or else the old lady had been rating of him.

He (in the greatness of his thoughts) strode on, and from time to time worked his lips and cast sharp glances at every gate-post, in the glow of imaginary speech. He could not feel that his son on the whole was a cleverer fellow than himself had been; and he played the traitor to knife and spade by hankering after gown and wig. "If my father," he said, "had only given me the chance I am giving Gregory, what might I be now? One of these same barons as terrify us with their javelins and gallows, and sit down with white tippets on. Or if my manners wasn't good enough for that, who could ever keep me from standing up, and defying all the villains for to put me down

so long as I spoke justice? And yet that might happen to be altogether wrong. I'm a great mind not to go over at all. My father was an honest man before me."

In this state of mind he sat down to breakfast, bright with reflections of Gregory's glory, yet dashed irregularly with doubts of the honesty of its origin, till, in quite his old manner, he made up his mind to keep his own counsel about the thing and ride over to the county town, leaving Applewood none the wiser. For John Shorne had orders the night before to keep his message quiet, which an old market-hand could be trusted to do; and as for the ladies, the Grower was sure that they knew much less and cared much less about the assizes than about the washing-day. So he went to his stables about nine o'clock, with enough of his Sunday raiment on to look well but awake no excitement, and taking a good horse, he trotted away with no other token behind him except that he might not be home at dinner-time, but might bring a stranger to supper perhaps; and they ought to have something roasted.

"Pride," as a general rule, of course, "goeth before a fall;" but the father's pride in the

present instance was so kindly and simple, that nature waived her favourite law, and stopped fortune from upsetting him. Although when he entered the court he did not find his son in confidential chat with the Lord Chief Justice, nor even in grave deliberation with a grand solicitor, but getting the worst of a conflict with an exorbitant fishmonger; and though the townspeople were not scared as much as they should have been by the wisdom of Gregory's collected front, neither did the latter look a quarter so wise as his father; yet a turn of luck put all things right, and even did substantial good. For the Grower at sight of his son was not to be stopped by any doorkeeper, but pushed his way into the circle of forensic dignity, and there saluted Gregory with a kiss on the band of his horsehair, and patted him loudly on the back, and challenging with a quick proud glance the opinions of the bar and bench, exclaimed in a good round Kentish tone—

"Well done, my boy! Hurrah for Greg! Gentlemen all, I'll be dashed if my son doth not look about the wisest of all of 'ee."

Loud titters ran the horsehair round, and more solid laughter stirred the crowd, while the officers of the court cried "Hush!" and the

Lord Chief Justice and his learned brother looked at the audacious Grower; while he, with one hand on each shoulder of his son, gazed around and nodded graciously.

"Who is this person—this gentleman, I mean?" asked the Lord Chief Justice, correcting himself through courtesy to young Lovejoy.

"My father, my lord," answered Gregory like a man, though blushing like his sister Mabel. "He has not seen me for a long time, my lord, and he is pleased to see me in this position."

"Ay, that I am, my lord," said the Grower, making his bow with dignity. "I could not abide it at first; but his mother—ah, what would she say to see him now? Martin Lovejoy, my lord, of Old Applewood farm, very much at your lordship's service."

The Judge was well pleased with this little scene, and kindly glanced at Gregory, of whom he had heard as a diligent pupil from his intimate friend Mr. Malahide; and being a man who missed no opportunity—as his present position pretty clearly showed—he said to the gratified franklin, "Mr. Lovejoy, I shall be glad to see you, if you can spare me half an hour after the court has risen."

These few words procured two briefs for Gregory at the next assizes, and thus set him forth on his legal course; though the Judge of course wanted—as the bar knew well—rather to receive than to give advice. For his lordship was building a mansion in Kent, and laying out large fruit-gardens, which he meant to stock with best sorts in the autumn; and it struck him that a professional grower, such as he knew Mr. Lovejoy to be, would be far more likely to advise him well, than the nurserymen, who commend most abundantly whatever they have in most abundance.

When the Grower had laid down the law to the Judge upon the subject of fruit-trees, and invited him to come and see them in bearing, as soon as time allowed of it, he set off in high spirits with his son, who had discharged his duties, but did not dine with his brethren of the wig. To do the thing in proper style, a horse was hired for Gregory, and they trotted gently, enjoying the evening, along the fairest road in England. Mr. Lovejoy was not very quick of perception, and yet it struck him once or twice that his son was not very gay, and did not show much pleasure at coming home; and at last he asked him suddenly—

"What are you thinking of, Greg, my boy? All this learning is as lead on the brain, as your poor grandfather used to say. A penny for your thoughts, my Lord Chief Justice."

"Well, father, I was not thinking of law-books, nor even of—well, I was thinking of nothing, except poor little Mabel."

"Ay, ay, John has told you, I suppose, how little she eats, and how pale she gets. No wonder either, with all the young fellows plaguing and pothering after her so. Between you and me, Master Gregory, I hope to see her married by the malting-time. Now, mind, she will pay a deal of heed to you now that you are a full-blown counsellor: young Jenkins is the man, remember; no more about that young dashing Lorraine."

"No, father, no more about him," said Gregory, sadly and submissively. "I wish I had never brought him here."

"No harm, my son; no harm whatever. That little fancy must be quite worn out. Elias is not over bright, as we know; but he is a steady and worthy young fellow, and will make her a capital husband."

"Well, that is the main point after all—a steadfast man who will stick to her. But you

must not hurry her, father, now. That would be the very way to spoil it."

"Hark to him, hark to him!" cried the Grower. "A counsellor with a vengeance! The first thing he does is to counsel his father how to manage his own household!"

Gregory did his best to smile; but the sunset in his eyes showed something more like the sparkle of a tear; and then they rode on in silence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW TO TAKE BAD TIDINGS.

AFTER sunset, Mabel Lovejoy went a little way up the lane leading towards the Maidstone road, on the chance of meeting her father. The glow of the west glanced back from the trees, and twinkled in the hedge-rows, and clustered in the Traveller's Joy, and here and there lay calmly waning on patches of mould that suited it. Good birds were looking for their usual roost, to hop in and out, and to talk about it, and to flap their wings and tails, until they should get sleepy. But the thrush, the latest songster now, since the rot of the nightingale, was cleaning his beak for his evensong; and a cock-robin, proud on the top of a pole, was clearing his throat after feeding his young—the third family of the season! The bats were waiting for better light; but

a great stag-beetle came out of the ivy, treading the air perpendicularly with heavy antlers balanced.

All these things fluttered in Mabel's heart, and made her sad, yet taught her not to dwell too much in sadness. Here were all things large and good, and going on for a thousand ages, with very little difference. When the cock-robin died, and the thrush was shot, there would be quite enough to come after them. When the leaf that glanced the sunset dropped, the bud for next year would be up in its place. Even if the trees went down before the storms of winter, fine young saplings grew between them, and would be glad of their light and air. Therefore, Mabel, weary not the ever-changing world with woe.

She did not reason thus, nor even think at all about it. From time to time she looked, and listened for her father's Galloway, and the heavy content of the summer night shed gentle patience round her. As yet she had no sense of wrong, no thought of love betrayed, nor even any dream of fickleness. Hilary was still to her the hero of all chivalry, the champion of the blameless shield, the Bayard of her life's romance. But now he lay wounded

in a barbarous land, perhaps dead, with no lover to bury him. The pointed leaves of an old oak rustled, a rabbit ran away with his scut laid down, a weasel from under a root peered out, and the delicate throat of the sensitive girl quivered with bad omens—for she had not the courage of Alice Lorraine.

Through the slur of the night wind (such as it makes in July only), and the random lifting of outer leaves—too thick to be dealt with properly—and the quivering loops of dependent danglers—who really hoped that they might sleep at last—and then the fall-away of all things from their interruption to the sweetest of all sweet relapse, and the deepest depth of quietude; Mabel heard, through all of these, the lively sound of horses' feet briskly ringing on a rise of ground. For the moment some folly of fancy took her, so that she leaned against a gate, and would have been glad to get over it. She knew how unfit she was to meet him. At last he was coming, with her father, to her! She had not a thing on fit to look at. And he must have seen such girls in Spain! Oh, how cruel of him to come, and take her by surprise so! But perhaps after all it was herself, and

not her clothes, he would care for. However, let him go on to the house—if she kept well into the gate-post—and then she might slip in, and put on her dress—the buff frock he admired so; and if it was much too large in the neck, he would know for whose sake it became so.

"What! Mabel, Mab, all out here alone; and trying to hide from her own brother!"

Gregory jumped from his horse, and caught her; and even in the waning light was frightened as she looked at him. Then she fell on his neck, and kissed and kissed him. Bitter as her disappointment was, it was something to have so dear a brother; and she had not seen him for so long, and he must have some news of Hilary. He felt her face, all wet with tears, turned up to him over and over again, and he felt how she trembled, and how slim she was, and he knew in a moment what it meant; and in his steadfast heart arose something that must have been a deep oath, but for much deeper sorrow. And then, like a man, he controlled it all.

"I will walk with you, darling, and lead my horse; or, father, perhaps you will take the bridle, and tell mother to be ready for

us. Mab is so glad to see me that she must not be hurried over it."

"Bless my heart!" said the Grower; "what a heap of gossip you chits of children always have. And nothing pleases you better than keeping your valued parents in the dark."

With this little grumble he rode on, leading Gregory's horse, and shouting back, at the corner of the lane, "Now don't be long with your confab, children; I have scarcely had a bit to eat to-day, and I won't have my supper spoiled for you."

Gregory thought it a very bad sign that Mabel sent no little joke after her father, as she used to do. Then he threw his firm arm around her waist, and led her homeward silently. But, even by his touch and step, she knew that there was no good news for her.

"Oh, Gregory, what is it all about?" she cried, with one hand on his shoulder, and soft eyes deeply imploring him. "You must have some message for me at last. It is so long since I had any. He is so kind, he would never leave me without any message all this time, unless—unless——"

"He is wounded, you know; how can he

write?" asked Gregory, with some irony. "Until he was wounded, how many times did I bring you fifty thousand kisses?"

"Oh, it is not that I was thinking of, though I am sure that was very nice of him. Ah, you need not be laughing, Gregory dear, as if you would not do the same to Phyllis. But do tell me what you have heard, dear brother; I can put up with anything better than doubt."

"Are you quite sure of that, darling Mab? Can you make up your mind for some very bad news?"

"I have not been used to it, Gregory: I—I have always been so happy. Is he dead? Only say that he is not dead?"

"No, he is not dead. Sit down a moment, under this old willow, while I fetch some water for you."

"I cannot sit down till I know the worst. If he is not dead, he is dying of his wounds. Oh my darling Hilary!"

"He is not dying; he is much better, and will soon rejoin his regiment."

"Then why did you frighten me so, for nothing? Oh how cruel it was of you! I really thought I was going to faint—a thing

I have never done in my life. You bring me the best news in the world, and you spoil it by your way of telling it."

"Don't be in such a hurry, darling. I wish that was all I have to tell you. But you have plenty of pride now, haven't you?"

"I—I don't know at all, I am sure; but I suppose I am the same as other girls."

"If you thought that Lorraine was unworthy of you, you could make up your mind to forget him, I hope."

"I never could do such a thing, because I never could dream it of Hilary. He is my better in every way. From feeling myself unworthy of him, I might perhaps try to do without him; but, as to forgetting him—never!"

"Not even if he forgot you, Mabel?"

"He cannot do it," she answered proudly. "He has promised never to forget me. And no gentleman ever breaks a promise."

"Then Hilary Lorraine is no gentleman. He has forgotten you; and is deeply in love with a Spanish lady."

Kind and good brother as he was, he had told his bad news too abruptly in his indignation. Mabel looked up faintly at him; and was struck in the heart so that she could not speak.

But the first of the tide of a sea of tears just moved beneath her eyelids.

"Now, come in to supper, that's a dear," whispered Gregory, frightened by the silent springs of sorrow. "If you are not at the table, poor darling, everything will be upside down, and everybody uncomfortable." He spoke like a fool, confounding coarsely her essence and her instincts. And perhaps some little turn of contrast broke the seals of anguish. She looked up, and she smiled, to show her proper sense of duty; and then (without knowledge of what she did) she pressed her right hand to her heart, and leaned on a rail, and fell forward into a torrent of shameless weeping. She was as a little child once more, whose soul is overwhelmed with woe. And all along the hollow hedges went the voice of sobbing.

"Now, do shut up," said Gregory, when he had borne it as long as a man can bear. "What is the good of it? Mabel, now, I thought you had more sense than this. After all, it may be false, you know."

"It is not false; it is what I have felt. You would not have told me, if it had been false. It has come from some dreadfully low mean person, who spies him only too accurately."

"Now, Mabel, you are quite out of yourself. You never did say nasty things. There is nobody spying Lorraine at all. I should doubt if he were worth it. Only it is well known in the regiment (and I had it on the best authority) that he—that he——"

"That he does what? And is that all your authority? I am beginning to laugh at the whole of it."

"Then laugh, my dear Mabel. I wish that you would. It is the true way of regarding such things."

"I dare say it may be for you great men. And you think that poor women can do the same; when indeed there is nothing to laugh at. I scarcely think that you ought to suggest the idea of laughing, Gregory. The best authority, you said. Is that a thing to laugh at?"

"Well, perhaps—perhaps it was not the best authority, after all. It was only two officers of his regiment, who know my friend Capper, who lives in chambers."

"A gentleman living in chambers, indeed, to revile poor Hilary who has been through the wall! And two officers of his regiment! Greg, I did think that you had a little more sense."

"Well, it seems to me pretty good evidence,

Mabel. Would you rather have them of another regiment?"

"Certainly not. I am very glad that they were of poor Hilary's regiment; because that proves they were story-tellers. There is not an officer in his own regiment that can help being jealous of him. After the noble things he has done! How dull you must be, not to see it all! I must come to the assizes, instead of you. Well, what a cry I have had, for nothing!"

"Mabel, you are a noble girl. I am sure you deserve the noblest sweetheart."

"And I have got him," said Mabel, smiling; "and I won't let him go. And I won't believe a single word against him, until he tells me that it is true himself. Do you think that he would not have written to me, even with the stump of his left hand, and said, 'Mabel, I am tired of you, Mabel, I have seen prettier girls, and more of my own rank in life; Mabel, you must try to forget me'? When he does that, I shall cry in earnest; and there will be no more Mabel."

"Come in to supper, my pet," said Gregory. And she came in to supper, with her sweet eyes shining.

CHAPTER XIX.

INNOCENCE IN NO SENSE.

NEAR the head of a pass of the Sierra Morena, but out of the dusty track of war, there stood a noble mansion, steadfast from and to unknown ages. The Moorish origin, here and there, was boldly manifest among Spanish, French, and Italian handiwork, both of repair and enlargement. The building must have looked queer at times, with new and incongruous elements; but the summer sun and the storms of winter had enforced among them harmony. So that now this ancient castle of the Counts of Zamora was a grand and stately pile in tone, as well as height and amplitude.

The position also had been chosen well; for it stood near the line of the watershed, commanding northward the beautiful valley of the Guadiana, and southward the plains of the

Guadalquivir; so that, as the morning mists rolled off, the towers of Mérida might be seen, and the high ground above Badajos; while far on the opposite sky-line flashed the gilt crosses of Cordova; and sometimes, when the distance lifted, a glimpse was afforded of the sunbeams quivering over Seville. And here, towards the latter end of August, 1812, Hilary Lorraine was a guest, and all his wishes law—save one.

The summer had been unusually hot, even for the south of Spain; and a fifth part of the British army was said to be in hospital. This may have been caused in some degree by their habits of drinking and plundering; which even Lord Wellington declared himself unfit to cope with. To every division of his army he appointed twenty provost-marshals; whereas two hundred would not have been enough to hang these heroes punctually. The patriotic Spaniards also could not see why they should not have some comfort from their native land. Therefore they overran it well with bands of fine fellows of a warlike cast, and having strong tendencies towards good things; and these were of much use to the British, not only by stopping the Frenchmen's letters, but also by living at large and gratis, so that the British,

who sometimes paid, became white sheep by the side of them.

One of the fiercest of these Guerillas,—or "Partidas," as they called themselves — was the notorious Mina; and for lieutenant he had a man of lofty birth, and once good position, a certain Don Alcides d'Alcar, a nephew of the Count of Zamora.

This man had run through every real of a large inheritance, and had slain many gentlemen in private brawls; and his country was growing too hot to hold him, when the French invasion came. The anarchy that ensued was just the very thing to suit him; and he raised a small band of uncertain young fellows, and took to wild life in the mountains. At first they were content to rob weak foreigners without escort; but thriving thus and growing stronger, very soon they enlarged their views. And so they improved, from year to year, in every style of plunder; and being authorized by the Juntas, and favoured by British generals, did harm on a large scale to their country; and on a much smaller scale, to the French.

Hilary had heard from Camilla much about Alcides d'Alcar; but Claudia had never spoken of him—only blushing proudly when the patriot's

name was mentioned. Camilla said that he was a man of extraordinary size and valour; enough to frighten anybody, and much too large to please her. And here she glanced at Hilary softly, and dropped her eyes, in a way to show that he was of the proper size to please her—if he cared to know it. He did not care a piastre to know it; but was eager about Alcides. "Oh, then, you had better ask Claudia," Camilla replied, with a sisterly look of very subtle import; and Claudia, with her proud walk passed, and glanced at them both disdainfully.

Now the victory of Salamanca, and his sorry absence thence, and after that the triumphant entry of the British into Madrid (although they were soon turned out again), began to work in Hilary's mind, and make him eager to rejoin. Three weeks ago he had been reported almost fit to do so, and had been ready to set forth; but Spanish ladies are full of subtlety, and Camilla stopped him. A cock of two lustres had been slain in some of the outer premises; and old Teresina stole down in the night, and behold, in the morning, the patient's wound had most evidently burst forth again. Hilary was surprised, but could not doubt the

testimony of his eyes; neither could the licentiate of medicine now attending him.

But now, in the breath of the evening breeze, setting inland from the Atlantic, Lorraine was roving for the last time in the grounds of Monte Argento. At three in the morning he must set forth, with horses provided by his host, on his journey to head quarters. The Count was known as a patriotic, wise, and wealthy noble, both of whose sons were fighting bravely in the Spanish army; and through his influence, Lorraine had been left to hospitality instead of hospitals, which in truth had long been overworked. But Major Clumps had returned to his duty long ago, with a very sore heart, when he found from the Donna Camilla that "she liked him very much indeed, but could never induce herself to love him." With the sharp eye of jealousy, that brave Major spied in Hilary the cause of this, and could not be brought to set down his name any more in his letters homeward; or at any rate, not for a very long time.

Lorraine, in the calm of this summer evening, with the heat-clouds moving eastward, and the ripple of refreshment softly wooing the burdened air, came to a little bower, or rather a

natural cove of rock and leaf, wherein (as he knew) the two fair sisters loved to watch the eventide weaving hill and glen with shadow, before the rapid twilight waned. There was something here that often brought his native Southdowns to his mind, though the foliage was so different. Instead of the rich deep gloss of the beech, the silvery stir of the aspen-tree, and the feathery droop of the graceful birch, here was the round monotony of the olive and the lemon-tree, the sombre depth of the ilex, and the rugged lines of the cork-tree, relieved, it is true, just here and there by the symmetry of the silver fir, and the elegant fan of the palm. But what struck Lorraine, and always irked him under these southern trees and skies, was the way in which the foliage cut its outline over sharply; there was none of that hovering softness, and sweetly fluctuating margin, by which a tree inspires affection as well as admiration.

Unluckily now Lorraine had neither affection nor admiration left for the innocent beauty of nature's works. His passion for Claudia was become an overwhelming and noxious power—a power that crushed for the time and scattered all his better elements. He had ceased to be light-hearted, and, to make the

best of everything, to love the smiles of children, and to catch a little joke and return it. He had even ceased to talk to himself, as if his conscience had let him know that he was not fit to be talked to. All the waking hours he passed, in the absence of his charmer, were devoted to the study of Spanish; and he began to despise his own English tongue. "There is no melody in it, no rhythm, no grand sonorous majesty," he used to complain; "it is like its owners, harsh, uncouth, and countrified." After this, what can any one do but pity him for his state of mind?

Whether Claudia returned his passion—for such it was rather than true affection—was still a very doubtful point, though the most important in all the world. Generally she seemed to treat him with a pleased contempt, as if he were a pleasant boy, though several years older than herself. Her clear dark eyes were of such a depth that, though she was by no means chary of their precious glances, he had never been able to reach that inmost light which comes from the very heart. How different from somebody's—of whom he now thought less and less, and vainly strove to think no more, because of the shame that pierced him! But

if this Spanish maiden really did not care about him, why did she try, as she clearly did, to conquer and subdue him? Why did she shoot such glances at him as Spanish eyes alone can shoot; why bend her graceful neck so sweetly, slope her delicate head so gently, showing the ripe firm curve of cheek, and with careless dancings let her raven hair fall into his? Hilary could not imagine why; but poor Camilla knew too well. If ever Camilla felt for a moment the desirability of any one, Claudia (with her bolder manners, and more suddenly striking beauty, and less dignified love of conquest) might be relied upon to rush in and attract the whole attention.

Hilary found these lovely sisters in their little cove of rock, where the hot wind seldom entered through the fringe of hanging frond. They had a clever device of their own for welcoming the Atlantic breeze, by means of a silken rope which lifted all the screen of fern, and creeper, and of grey rock-ivy.

Now the screen was up, and the breeze flowed in, meeting a bright rill bubbling out (whose fountain was in the living rock), and the clear obscurity was lit with forms as bright as poetry. Camilla's comely head had been laid

on the bosom of her sister, as if she had made some soft appeal for mercy or indulgence there. And Claudia had been moved a little, as the glistening of her eyelids showed, and a tender gleam in her expression—the one and the only thing required to enrich her brilliant beauty. And thus, without stopping to think, she came up to Hilary, with a long kind glance, and gave a little sigh, worth more than even that sweet glance to him.

"Alas! dear Captain," she said in Spanish, which Hilary was quite pat with now; "we have been lamenting your brief departure. How shall we live when you are lost?"

"What cruelty of yourselves to think! The matter of your inquiry should be the chance of my survival."

"Well said!" she exclaimed. "You English are not so very stupid after all. Why do you not clap your hands, Camilla?"

Camilla, being commanded thus, made a weak attempt with her little palms; but her heart was down too low for any brisk concussion of flesh or air.

"I believe, Master Captain," said Claudia, throwing herself gracefully on a white bull's hide—shaped as a chair on the slopes of

moss—"that you are most happy to make your escape from this long and dull imprisonment. Behold, how little we have done for you, after all the brave things you have done for us!"

"Ah, no," said Camilla, gazing sadly at the "captain," who would not gaze at her; "it is true that we have done but little. Yet, Senhor, we meant our best."

"Your kindness to me has been wonderful, magnificent!" answered Hilary. "The days I have passed under your benevolence have been the happiest of my life."

Hereupon Camilla turned away, to hide her tenderness of tears. But Claudia had no exhibition, except a little smile to hide.

"And will you come again?" she asked. "Will you ever think of us any more, in the scenes of your grand combats, and the fierce delight of glory?"

"Is it possible for me to forget"—began Hilary, in his noblest Spanish—"your constant care of a poor stranger, your never fatigued attention to him, and thy—thy saving of his life? To thee I owe my life, and will at any moment render it."

This was a little too much for Camilla, who

really had saved him; and being too young to know how rarely the proper person gets the praise, she gathered up her things to go.

"Darling Claudia," she exclaimed, "I can do nothing at all without my little silver spinetta. This steel thing is so rusty that it fills my work with canker. You know the danger of rusty iron, Claudia; is it not so?"

"She is cross," said Claudia, as her sister with gentle dignity left the cove. "What can have made her so cross to-day?"

"The saints are good to me," Hilary answered, little suspecting the truth of the case: "they grant me the chance of saying what I have long desired to say to you."

"To me, Senhor!" cried the maiden, displaying a tremulous glow in her long black eyes, and managing to blush divinely, and then in the frankness of her nature caring not to conceal a sigh. "It cannot be to me, Senhor!"

"To you—to you, of all the worlds, of all the heavens, and all the angels!" The fervent youth fell upon his knees before his lovely idol, and seized the hand she began to press to her evidently bounding heart, and drew her towards him, and thought for the

moment that she was glad to come to him. Then, in his rapture, he stroked aside her loose and deliciously fragrant hair, and waited, with all his heart intent, for the priceless glance—to tell him all. But, strongly moved as she was, no doubt, by his impassioned words and touch, and the sympathy of youthful love, she kept her oval eyelids down, as if she feared to let him see the completion of his conquest. Then, as he fain would have had her nearer, and folded in his eager arms, she gently withdrew, and turned away; but allowed him to hear one little sob, and to see tears irrepressible.

"You loveliest of all lovely beings," began Lorraine, in very decent Spanish, such as herself had taught him; "and at the same time, you best and dearest——"

"Stop, Senhor," she whispered, gazing sadly, and then playfully, at this prize of her eyes and slave of her lips; "I must not allow you to say so much. You will leave us to-morrow, and forget it all. What is the use of this fugitive dream?"

Hereupon the young soldier went through the usual protestations of truth, fidelity, devotion, and eternal memory; so thoroughly

hurried and carried away, that he used in another tongue the words poured forth scarcely a year ago to a purer, truer, and nobler love.

"Alas!" the young Donna now mimicked, in voice and attitude, some deserted one; "to how many beautiful English maidens have these very noble words been used! You cavaliers are all alike. I will say no more to you now, brave captain; the proof of truth is not in words, but in true and devoted actions. You know our proverb—'The cork is noisiest when it leaves the bottle.' If you would have me bear you in mind, you must show that you remember me."

"At the cost of my life, of my good repute, of all that I have in the world, or shall have, of everything but my hope of you."

"I shall remember these words, my captain; and perhaps I shall put them to the test some day." She gave him her soft and trembling hand, and he pressed it to his lips, and sought to impress a still more loving seal; but she said "Not yet, not yet, oh beloved one!" Or whether she said "oh enamoured one," he could not be quite certain. And before he could do or say anything more, she had passed from his reach, and was gliding swiftly under

the leafy curtain of that ever-sacred bower. "She is mine, she is mine!" cried young Lorraine, as he caught up the velvet band of her hair, and covered it with kisses, and then bestowed the same attentions on the white bull-skin, where her form had lain. "The loveliest creature ever seen is mine! What can I have done to deserve her?"

While he lay in the ecstasy of his triumph, the loveliest creature ever seen stole swiftly up a rocky path, beset with myrtle and cornel-wood, and canopied with climbers. After some intricate turns, and often watching that no one followed her, she came to the door of a little hut embosomed in towering chestnut-trees. The door was open, and a man of great stature was lounging on a couch too short for his legs, and smoking a cigar of proportions more judiciously adapted to his own. Near one of his elbows stood a very heavy carbine, and a sword three-quarters of a fathom long; and by his other hand lay a great pitcher empty and rolled over.

As the young Donna's footfall struck his ears, he leaped from his couch, and cocked his gun; then, recognizing the sound, replaced it, and stood indolently at his door.

"At last, you are come then!" he said, with an accent decidedly of the northern provinces (not inborn, however, but caught from comrades); "I thought that you meant to let me die of thirst. You forget that I have lost the habit of this execrable heat."

Claudia looked up at her cousin Don Alcides d'Alcar—or, as he loved to be called, "the great Brigadier"—with a very different gaze from any poor Hilary could win of her. To this man alone the entire treasures of her heart were open; for him alone her glorious eyes no longer sparkled, flashed, or played with insincere allurements; but beamed and shone with depths of light, and profusion of profoundest love.

"Darling," she said, as she stood on tiptoe, and sweetly pacified him; "I have laboured in vain to come sooner to you. Your commands took a long time to execute, sir. You men can scarcely understand such things. And that tiresome Camilla hung about me; I thought my occasion would never arrive. But all has gone well: he is my slave for ever."

"You did not allow him to embrace you, I trust?" Before he could finish his scowl, she stopped his mouth, and reassured him.

"Is it to be imagined? A miserable shaveling Briton!" But, though she looked so indignant, she knew how near she had been to that ignominy.

"You are as clever as you are lovely," answered the Brigadier, well pleased. "But I die of thirst, my beloved one. Fly swiftly to Teresina's store; for I dare not venture till the night has fallen. Would that you could manage your father, as you wind those striplings round your spindle!"

For the Count of Zamora had given orders that his precious nephew should be shot, if ever found upon land of his. So Claudia took the empty pitcher to fetch another half-skin of wine, as well as some food, for the great Brigadier; and, having performed this duty, met the infatuated Hilary, for the last time, at her father's board. She wished him good night, and good-bye, with a glance of deep meaning and kind encouragement; while the fair Camilla bent over his hand, and then departed to her chamber, with full eyes and an empty heart.

CHAPTER XX.

HARD RIDING AND HARD READING.

In those old times of heavy pounding, scanty food, and great hardihood, when war was not accounted yet as one of the exact sciences, and soldiers slept, in all sorts of weather, without so much as a blanket round them, much less a snug tent overhead, the duties of the different branches of the service were not quite so distinct as they are now. Lieutenant Lorraine—for the ladies had given over rapid promotion when they called him their "brave captain"—had not rejoined his regiment long before he obtained acknowledgment of his good and gallant actions. Having proved that he could sit a horse, see distinctly at long distance, and speak the Spanish language fairly—thanks to the two young Donnas—and possessed some other accomplishments (which would now be tested by paper work), he received an appoint-

ment upon the Staff, not of the Light Division, but at Head-quarters, under the very keen eyes of "the hero of a hundred fights."

If the brief estimate of his compeers is of any importance to a man of powerful genius—as no doubt it must be, by its effect on his opportunities—then the Iron Duke, though crowned with good luck (as everybody called each triumph of his skill and care), certainly seems to have been unlucky as to the date of his birth and work. "Providence in its infinite wisdom"—to use a phrase of the Wesleyans, who claim the great general as of kin to their own courageous founder—produced him at a time, no doubt, when he was uncommonly needful; but when (let him push his fame as he would, by victory after victory) there always was a more gigantic, because a more voracious, glory marching far in front of him. Our great Hero never had the chance of terrifying the world by lopping it limb by limb and devouring it; and as noble glory is the child of terror (begotten upon it by violence), the fame of Wellington could never vie with Napoleon's glory.

To him, however, this mattered little, except that it often impaired his means of

discharging his duty thoroughly. His present duty was to clear the Peninsula of Frenchmen; and this he would perhaps have done in a quarter of the time it cost, if his own country had only shown due faith in his abilities. But the grandeur of his name grew slowly (as the fame of Marcellus grew), like a tree in the hidden lapse of time; and perhaps no other general ever won so many victories, before his country began to dream that he could be victorious.

Now this great man was little, if at all, inferior to his mighty rival in that prime necessity of a commander—insight into his material. He made a point of learning exactly what each of his officers was fit for; and he seldom failed, in all his warfare, to put the "right man in the right place." He saw at a glance that Lieutenant Lorraine was a gallant and chivalrous young fellow, active and clever in his way, and likely to be very useful on the Staff, after a little training. And so many young aids had fallen lately, or were upon the sick-list, that the quartermaster-general was delighted with a recruit so quick and zealous as Hilary soon proved himself. And after a few lessons in his duties, he set him to work with might and

main to improve his knowledge of "colloquial French."

With this Lorraine, having gift of tongues, began to grow duly familiar; and the more so perhaps because his knowledge of "epistolary English" afforded him very little pleasure just now. For all his good principles and kind feelings must have felt rude shock and shame, when he read three letters from England which reached him on the very same day at Valladolid. The first was from his Uncle Struan; and after making every allowance for the rector's want of exercise in the month of August, Hilary, (having perhaps a little too much exercise himself) could not help feeling that the tone was scarcely so hearty as usual. The letter was mainly as follows:—

"West Lorraine, 20th August, 1812.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW,

"Your father and myself have not been favoured with any letters from you for a period of several months. It appears to me that this is neither dutiful nor affectionate; although we know that you have been wounded, which increased our anxiety. You may have been too bad to write, and I wish to make all allowance

for you. But where there is a will there is a way. When I was at Oxford, few men perhaps in all the University felt more distaste than I did for original Latin composition. Yet every Saturday, when we went to the hall to get our battelbills—there was my essay, neatly written, and of sound Latinity."—"Come, come," cried Lorraine; "this is a little too cool, my dear uncle. How many times have I heard you boast what you used to pay your scout's son per line!"

"I cannot expect any young man, of course," continued the worthy parson, "to make such efforts for conscience' sake as in my young days were made cheerfully. But this indolence and dislike of the pen *furcâ expellendum est*—must be expelled with a knife and fork. Perhaps you will scarcely care to hear that your aunt and cousins are doing well. After your exploits your memory seems to have grown very short of poor folk in old England. Your birthday falling on a Sunday this year, I took occasion to allude in the course of my sermon to a mural crown, of which I remember to have heard at school. Nobody knew what I meant; but many were more affected than if they did. But, after all, it requires, to my mind, quite as much

courage, and more skill, to take a dry wall properly, when nobody has been over it, than to scramble into Badajos. Alice will write to you by this post, and tell you all the gossip of the sad old house, if there is any. There seems to be nobody now with life enough to make much gossip. And all that we hear is about Captain Chapman (who means to have Alice), and about yourself.

"About you it is said, though I cannot believe it, and must be ashamed of you when I do so, that you are making a fool of yourself with a Spanish lady of birth and position, but a rank, idolatrous, bigoted Papist! The Lorraines have been always sadly heterodox in religious matters, from age to age receiving every whim they came across of. They have taken to astrology, Mahomet, destiny, and the gods of Greece, and they never seem to know when to stop. The only true Church, the Church of England, never has any hold of them; and if you should marry a Papist, Hilary, it would be a judgment.

"Your father, perhaps, would be very glad of any looseness of mind and sense, that might have the power to lead you astray from my ideas of honour. I have had a little explanation with

him; in the course of which, as he used stronger language than I at all approve of, I ventured to remind him that from the very outset I had charged him with what I call this low intention, this design of working upon your fickle and capricious temper, to make you act dishonourably. Your poor father was much annoyed at this home-truth, and became so violent, and used such unbecoming language, that I thought it the most clerical course to leave him to reflect upon it. On the following Sunday I discoursed upon the third chapter of the Epistle of St. James; but there was only Alice in the Coombe pew. I saw, however, that she more than once turned away her face with shame, although I certainly did not discover any tears. It is to be hoped that she gave Sir Roland an accurate summary of my discourse; none of which (as I explained to your dear aunt after the service) was intended for my own domestic hearth. Since that time I have not had the pleasure of meeting Sir Roland Lorraine in private life.

"And now a few words as to your own conduct. Your memory is now so bad that you may have forgotten what I did for you. At a time when my parish and family were in much need of my attention, and two large coveys of

quite young birds were lying every night in the corner of the Hays, I left my home in extremely hot weather, simply to be of use to you. My services may have been trifling; but at that time you did not think so. It was not my place to interfere in a matter which was for your father's decision. But I so far committed myself, that if you are fool enough and knave enough—for I never mince language, as your father does—to repudiate your engagement with a charming and sensible girl, for the sake of high-flying but low-minded Papists, much of the disgrace will fall on me.

"And what are those Spanish families (descended perhaps from Don Quixote, or even Sancho Panza) to compare with Kentish land-owners, who derive their title from the good old Danes? And what are their women when they get yellow—as they always do before twenty-five—compared with an Englishwoman, who generally looks her best at forty? And not only that (for after all, that is a secondary question, as a man grows wise), but is a southern foreigner likely to make an Englishman happy? Even if she becomes converted from her image worship (about which they are very obstinate), can she keep his house for him? Can she

manage an English servant? Can she order a dinner? does she even know when a bed is aired? can a gentleman dine and sleep at her house after a day's hunting, without having rheumatism, gout, and a bilious attack in the morning? All this, you will think, can be managed by deputy; and in very large places it must be so. But I have been a guest in very large places—very much finer than Coombe Lorraine, however your father may have scoffed at me; and I can only say that I would rather be the guest of an English country-squire, or even a parson, with a clever and active wife at the head of his table, than of a duke with a grand French cook, and a duchess who never saw a dust-pan.

"And if you should marry a Spaniard, where are you to get your grand establishment? Your father never saves a farthing, and you are even less likely to do so. And as for the lady, she of course will have nothing. 'My blood is blue because I have no breeches,' says one of their poets, feelingly; and that is the case with all of them. Whereas I have received a little hint, it does not matter how or where, that Mabel Lovejoy (who is much too good for any fickle jackanapes) is down for a nice round sum

in the will of a bachelor banker at Tonbridge. Her father and mother do not know it, neither do any of her family; but I did not pass my very pleasant holiday in that town for nothing. Every one seemed to understand me, and I was thoroughly pleased with all of them.

"But I shall not be pleased at all with you, and in good truth you never shall darken my door, if you yield yourself, bound hand and foot, to any of those Dulcineas, or rather Dalilahs. I have known a good many Spaniards, when Nelson was obliged to take them prisoners; they are a dirty, lazy lot, unfit to ride anything but mules, and they poison the air with garlic.

"Your aunt and cousins, who have read this letter, say that I have been too hard upon you. The more they argue the more I am convinced that I have been far too lenient. So that I will only add their loves, and remain, my dear nephew,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"STRUAN HALES.

"P.S.—We expect a very grand shooting season. Last year, through the drought and heat, there was not a good turnip-field in the parish. Birds were very numerous, as they

always are in hot seasons; but there was no getting near them. This season, the turnips are up to my knees. How I wish that you were here, instead of popping at the red legs! Through the great kindness of young Steenie Chapman I am to have free warren of all Sir Remnant's vast estates! But I like the home-shooting best; and no doubt your father will come to a proper state of mind before the first. Do not take amiss, my dear boy, whatever I may have said for your good. *Scribe cito. Responde cras.*

"Your loving uncle,

"S. H."

All this long epistle was read by Hilary in the saddle; for he had two horses allowed him now—whenever he could get them—and now he was cantering with an order to an outpost of the advanced-guard, tracking the rear of Clausel. They knew not yet what Clausel was,—one of the few men who ever defied, and yet escaped from Wellington. The British Staff was weak just now, though freshly recruited with Hilary; or haply the Frenchman might not have succeeded in his brilliant movement.

"He must be terribly put out," said young Lorraine, meaning neither Clausel, nor Wellington, nor Napoleon even, but his Uncle Struan; "there is not a word of any paragon dog, nor the horses he has bought or chopped, nor even little Cecil. He must have had a great row with my father, and he visits it on this generation. How can he have heard of angelic Claudia, and then talk of garlic? My darling, I know what you are, though heavy-seated Britons fail to soar to such perfection! Now for Alice, I suppose. She will know how to behave, I should hope. Why, how she begins, as if I were her thirty-second cousin ten times removed! And how precious short it is! But what a beautifully clear firm hand!"

"My dear Hilary,

"My father, not having any time to spare just now, and having received no letter from you which he might desire to answer, has asked me to say that we are quite well, and that we are very glad to hear that you seem to have greatly distinguished yourself. To hear this must always be, as you will feel, a pleasure and true pride to us. At the same

time we have been very anxious, because you have been returned in the *Gazette* as heavily wounded. We hope, however, that it is not so, for we have been favoured with a very long letter from Major Clumps of your regiment to my grandmother's dear friend, Lady de Lampnor, in which you were spoken of most highly; and since that he has not spoken of you, as he must have done, if you were wounded. Pray let us hear at once what the truth is. Uncle Struan was very rude to my father about you the other day, and used the most violent language, and preached such a sermon against himself on Sunday! But he has not been up to apologize yet; and I hear from dear Cecil that he means to tell you all about it. He is most thoroughly good, poor dear; but allowances must be made for him.

"He will tell you, of course, all the gossip of the place; which is mainly, as usual, about himself. He seems to attach so much importance to what we consider trifles. And he does the most wonderful things sometimes.

"He has taken a boy from the bottom of our hill—the boy that stole the donkey, and lived upon rags and bottles—and he has him at the Rectory, every day except Sunday, to

clean knives and boots. The whole of the village is quite astonished; the boy used to run for his life at the sight of dear Uncle Struan, and we cannot help thinking that it is done just because we could never encourage the boy.

"Papa thinks that you are very likely to require a little cash just now, for he knows that young officers are poorly paid, even when they can get their money, which is said to be scarce with your brave army now; therefore he has placed £100 to your credit with Messrs. Shotman, for which you can draw as required, and the money will be replaced at Christmas. And grandmamma begs me to add that she is so pleased with your success in the only profession fit for a gentleman, that she sends from her own purse twenty guineas, through the hands of Messrs. Shotman. And she trusts that you will now begin to cultivate frugality.

"With these words I must now conclude, prolonging only to convey the kind love of us all, and best desires for your welfare, with which I now subscribe myself,

"Your affectionate sister,

"ALICE LORRAINE.

"P.S.—Darling Brother,—The above has been chiefly from that grandmamma. I have

leave to write to you now myself; and the rest of this piece of paper will hold not a hundredth part of what I want to say. I am most unhappy about dear papa, and about you, and Uncle Struan, and Captain Chapman, and everybody. Nothing goes well; and if you fight in Spain, we fight much worse in England. Father is always thinking, and dwelling upon his thoughts, in the library. He knows that he has been hard upon you; and the better you go on, the more he worries himself about it, because he is so thoroughly set upon being just to everyone. And even concerning a certain young lady—it is not as Uncle Struan fancies. You know how headlong he is, and he cannot at all understand our father. My father has a justice such as my uncle cannot dream of. But dear papa doubts your knowledge of your own mind, darling Hilary. What a low idea of Uncle Struan, that you were sent to Spain to be tempted! I did not like what happened to you in Kent last summer, any more than other people did. But I think that papa would despise you—and I am quite sure that I should—if you deceived anybody after leading them to trust you. But of course you could not do it, darling, any more than I could.

"Now do write home a nice cheerful letter, with every word of all you do, and everything you can think of. Papa pretends to be very quiet—but I am sure that he is always thinking of you; and he seems to grow so much older. I wish all his books were at Hanover! I would take him for a good ride every day. Good-bye, darling! If you make out this, you will deserve a crown of crosses. Uncle Struan thought that he was very learned; and he confounded the mural with the civic crown! Having earned the one, earn the other by saving us all, and your own

"LALLIE."

Hilary read this letter twice; and then put it by, to be read again; for some of it touched him sadly. Then he delivered the orders he bore, and made a rough sketch of the valley, and returning by another track, drew forth his third epistle. This he had feared to confront, because his conscience went against him so; for he knew that the hand was Gregory's. However, it must be met sooner or later: it was no good putting off the evil day; and so he read as follows:—

"Mid. Temple, Aug. 2nd, 1812.

"MY DEAR LORRAINE,

"It is now many months since I heard from you, and knowing that you had been wounded, I have been very anxious about you, and wrote three several times to inquire, under date May 3rd, June 7th, and July 2nd. Of course none of these may have come to hand, as they were addressed to your regiment, and I do not at all understand how you manage without having any post-town. But I have heard through my friend Capper, who knows two officers of your regiment, that you were expected to return to duty in July, since which I have vainly expected to hear from you by every arrival. No one, therefore, can charge me with haste or impatience in asking, at last, for some explanation of your conduct. And this I do with a heavy heart, in consequence of some reports which have reached me, from good authority."

"Confound the fellow!" cried the conscious Hilary; "how he beats about the bush! Will he never have it out and be done with it? What an abominably legal and cold-blooded style! Ah, now for it!"

"You must be aware that you have won

the warmest regard, and indeed I must say the whole heart, of my sister Mabel. This was much against the wishes and intentions of her friends. She was not thrown in your way to catch the heir to a title, and a rich man's son. We knew that there would be many obstacles, and we all desired to prevent it. Even I, though carried away by my great regard for you, never approved it. If you have a particle of your old candour left, you will confess that from first to last the engagement was of your own seeking. I knew, and my sister also knew, that your father could not be expected to like it, or allow it, for a very long time to come. But we also knew that he was a man of honour and integrity, and that if he broke it off, it would be done by fair means, and not by foul. Everything depended upon yourself. You were not a boy, but a man at least five years older than my sister, and you formed this attachment with your eyes open, and did your utmost to make it mutual."

"To be sure I did," exclaimed the young officer, giving a swish to his innocent horse, because himself deserved it; "how could I help it? She was such a dear! How I wish I had never seen Claudia! But really, Gregory,

come now, you are almost too hard upon me!"

"And not only this," continued that inexorable young barrister; "but, lest there should be any doubt about your serious intentions, you induced, or at any rate you permitted, your uncle, the Rev. Struan Hales, to visit Mabel and encourage her, and assure her that all opposition would fail if she remained true and steadfast.

"Mabel has remained true and steadfast, even to the extent of disbelieving that you can be otherwise. From day to day, and from week to week, she has been looking for a message from you, if it were only one kind word. She has felt your wound, I make bold to say, a great deal more than you have done. She has taken more pride than you can have taken, in what she calls your 'glory.' She watches every morning for the man who goes for the letters, and every evening she waits and listens for a step that never comes.

"If she could only make up her mind that you had quite forgotten her, I hope that she would try to think that you were not worth grieving for. But the worst of it is that she cannot bring herself to think any ill of you.

And until she has it under your own hand that you are cruel and false to her, she only smiles at and despises those who think it possible.

"We must put a stop to this state of things. It is not fair that any girl should be kept in the dark and deluded so; least of all such a girl as Mabel, so gentle, and true, and tender-hearted. Therefore I must beg you at once to write to my sister or to me, and to state honestly your intentions. If your intention is to desert my sister, I ask you, as a last favour to do it as rudely and roughly as possible, so that her pride may be aroused and help her to overget the blow. But if you can give any honourable explanation of your conduct, no one will be more delighted, and beg your pardon more heartily and humbly, than your former friend,

"GREGORY LOVEJOY."

CHAPTER XXI.

TRY TO THINK THE BEST OF ME.

LORRAINE set spurs to his horse as soon as he got to the end of this letter. It was high time for him to gallop away from the one idea,—the bitter knowledge that out of this he could not come with the conscience of a gentleman. He was right in fleeing from himself, as hard as ever he could go; for no Lorraine had been known ever to behave so shabbily. In the former days of rather low morality and high feudalism, many Lorraines might have taken fancies to pretty girls, and jilted them—but never as he had done; never approaching a pure maid as an equal, and pledging honour to her, and then dishonourably deserting her.

"I am sure I know not what to do," he cried, in a cold sweat, while his nag was in a very hot one. "Heaven knows who my true

love is. I am almost sure that it must be Mabel; because when I think of her I get hot; and when I think of Claudia, I get cold."

There may have been some sense in this; at any rate it is a question for a meteorologist. Though people who explain—as they always manage to do—everything, might without difficulty declare that they understood the whole of it. That a young man in magnetic attitude, towards two maidens widely distinct, one positive and one negative, should hop up and down, like elder-pith, would of course be accounted for by the "strange phenomena of electricity." But little was known of such things then; and every man had to confront his own acts, without any fine phraseology. And Hilary's acts had left him now in such a position—or "fix" as it is forcibly termed now-a-days—that even that most inventive Arab, the Sheikh of the Subterfuges, could scarcely have delivered him.

But, after all, the griefs of the body (where there is perpetual work) knock at the door of the constitution louder than those of the mind do. And not only Hilary now, but all the British army found it hard to get anything to eat. As for money—there was none, or next to none, among them; but this was a trifling

matter to men who knew so well how to help themselves. But shoes, and clothing, and meat for dinner, and yellow soap for horny soles, and a dram of something strong at night before lying down in the hole of their hips,—they felt the want of these comforts now, after spending a fortnight in Madrid. And now they were bound to march every day fifteen to twenty English miles, over very hard ground, and in scorching weather, after an enemy offering more than affording chance of fighting.

These things made every British bosom ready to explode with anger; and the Staff was blamed, as usual, for negligence, ignorance, clumsiness, inability, and all the rest of it. These reproaches entered deeply into the bruised heart of Lorraine, and made him so zealous that his chief very often laughed while praising him. And thus in the valley of the Arlanzan, on the march towards Burgos, he became a gallant captain, with the goodwill of all who knew him.

Lorraine was royally proud of this; for his nature was not self-contained. He contemplated many letters, beginning "Captain Lorraine presents his compliments to so-and-so;" and he even thought at one time of thus defy-

ing his Uncle Struan. However, a little reflection showed him that the wisest plan was to let the rector abide a while in silence. It was out of all reason—though not, perhaps, entirely beyond precedent—that he, the least injured of all the parties, should be the loudest in complaint; and it would serve him right to learn, from the hostile source of Coombe Lorraine, the withering fact that his recreant nephew was now a British captain bold.

To Alice, therefore, the Captain wrote at the very first opportunity, to set forth his promotion, and to thank his father and grandmother for cash. But he made no allusion to home-affairs, except to wish everybody well. This letter he despatched on the 17th of September; and then, being thoroughly stiff and weary from a week spent in the saddle, he shunned the camp-fires and the cooking, and slept in a tuffet of plantain-grass, to the melody of the Arlanzan.

On the following day our army, being entirely robbed of fighting by a dancing Frenchman (who kept snapping his fingers at Lord Wellington), entered in no pleasant humour into a burning city. The sun was hot enough in all conscience, roasting all wholesome Britons into a dirty Moorish colour, without a poor halt

and maimed soldier having to march between burning houses. A house on fire is full of interest, and has become proverbial now as an illustration of bright success. But the metaphor —whether derived or not from military privileges—proceeds on the supposition that the proper people have applied the torch. In the present case this was otherwise. The Frenchmen had fired the houses, and taken excellent care to rob them first.

Finding the heat of the town of Burgos almost past endurance, although the fire had now been quenched, Hilary strolled forth towards sunset for a little change of air. His duties, which had been so incessant, were cut short for a day or two; but to move his legs, with no horse between them, seemed at first unnatural. He passed through narrow reeking streets, where filthy people sprawled about under overlapping eaves and coignes, and then he came to the scorched rough land, and looked back at the citadel. The garrison, now that the smoke was clearing from the houses below the steep (which they had fired for safety's sake), might be seen in the western light, training their guns upon the city, which swarmed with Spanish guerillas.

These sons of the soil were plundering with as good a grace as if themselves had taken a hostile city; and in the enthusiasm of the moment, or from force of habit perhaps, some of them gladly lent a hand in robbing their own houses. But the British soldiers grounded arms, and looked on very grimly; for they had not carried the town by storm, and their sense of honesty prevailed. All this amused Lorraine, who watched it through his field-glass, as he sat on a rocky mound outside the city, resting himself, for his legs were stiff, and feeling quite out of his element at being his own master. But presently he saw that the French, who were very busy in the castle, were about to treat both Spaniards and Britons to a warm salute of shells; and he rose at once to give them warning, but found his legs too stiff for speed. So he threw a half-dollar to a Portuguese soldier, who was sauntering on the road below, and bade him run at his very best pace, and give notice of their danger.

But before his messenger had passed the gate, Hilary saw a Spanish chief, as in the distance he seemed to be, come swiftly out of a side street, and by rapid signals recall and place quite out of the line of fire all the plundering

Spaniards. This man, as Hilary's spy-glass showed him, was of very great breadth and stature, and wore a slouch-hat with a short black feather, a green leather jerkin, and a broad white sash; his mighty legs were encased above mid-thigh in boots of undressed hide; and he was armed with a long straight sword and dagger. Having some experience of plunderers, Hilary was surprised at the prompt obedience yielded to this guerilla-chief, until he was gratified by observing a sample of his discipline. For two of his men demurring a little to the abandonment of their prey, he knocked them down, as scientifically as an English pugilist; handed their booty to others, and had them dragged by the heels round the corner. Then having his men all under cover, he stood in a calm and reflective attitude, with an immense cigar in his mouth, to see a fine group of thirsty Britons (who were drinking in the middle of the square), shot or shelled as the case might be. And when Hilary's messenger ran up in breathless haste to give the alarm, and earn his half-dollar honestly, what did that ruthless fellow do, but thrust forth a long leg, trip him up, and hand him over with a grin to some brigands, who rifled his pockets and stopped his

mouth. Then came what Hilary had expected, a roar, a plunge, a wreath of smoke, and nine or ten brave Englishmen lay shattered round the fountain.

"That Spaniard is a very queer ally," said Hilary, with a shudder. "He knew what was coming, and he took good care that it should not be prevented. Let me try to see his face, if my good glass will show it. I call him a bandit, and nothing else. *Partidas* indeed! I call them cut-throats."

At that very moment, the great guerilla turned round to indulge in a hearty laugh, and having a panel of pitched wall behind him, presented his face (like a portrait in an ebony frame) towards Hilary. The collar of the jerkin was folled back, and the great bull throat and neck left bare, except where a short black beard stood forth, like a spur of jet to the heavy jaws. The mouth was covered with a thick moustache; but haughty nostrils and a Roman nose, as well as deep lines of face, and fierce eyes hung with sullen eyebrows, made Hilary cry, "What an ugly fellow!" as he turned his glass upon something else.

Yet this was a face such as many women dote upon and almost adore. Power is the

first thing they look for in the face of a man; or at least it is the very first thing that strikes them. And "power" of that sort is headstrong will, with no regard for others. From mental power it so diverges that very few men have embodied both; as nature has kindly provided, for the happiness of the rest of us. But Captain Lorraine, while he watched that Spaniard, knew that he must be a man of mark, though he little dreamed that his wild love Claudia utterly scorned his own comely self in comparison with that "ugly fellow."

But for the moment the sight of that brigand, and slaughter of good English soldiers, set Hilary (who, with all his faults, was vigorously patriotic) against the whole race of Spaniards, male or female, or whatever they might be.

Moreover, his long absence now from Claudia, and her neglect to write (as she had promised to do) to him, as well as an anecdote which he had heard on good authority about her, had combined to weaken the spell of her dazzling and impassioned beauty—a power which above all others, must have its victim within reach. And even as regarded mere personal charms, the more he had to deal with

the Spanish race, the more he acknowledged the truth of the words of his good Uncle Struan. Mabel, at thirty, would be in full beauty; Claudia would be rapidly falling into the sere and yellow leaf. The more he thought of the matter, the more his heart glowed back towards the one who loved him, and cooled towards the selfish foreigner.

While he was in this state of mind, a mounted orderly dashed up, and placed a small parcel in his hand. "From home, sir," he said, and saluted, and dashed off. Hilary opened it, and found a most lovely miniature of Mabel. There was the good, bright, clever face; the calm clear forehead, and the rich brown eyes; the rosy lips ready for a charming smile; the soft glossy hair, in natural curls to fit caressing fingers. Above all there was, what there never could be in the face of Claudia, the happy expression of lovingkindness, faith, and truth, and constancy.

Who sent that portrait was for years unknown to any one but the sender. It proved in the end to be Uncle Struan.

Hilary gazed at it most intently, and for some moments sadly. But the more he gazed

the better and brighter became his own expression. The goodness of his true-love seemed to breathe from her face into his, and fill him with a likeness to her, and chasten, enlarge, and ennoble him.

Hesitation was henceforth banished; and being driven by nature, as usual, rather with a spur than bridle, he made a strong dash at a desperate fence which for months had been puzzling him. Horses unluckily do not write, although they talk, and laugh, and think, and tell with their eyes a great deal more than most of us who ride them. Therefore this metaphor must be dropped, for Lorraine pulled out his roll of paper, pen, and ink (which he was bound to carry), and put up his knees, all stiff and creaking, and on that desk did what he ought to have done at least three months ago. He wrote to his loving Mabel; surely better late than never.

"My darling Mabel,

"I know that I have not behaved to you kindly, or even as a gentleman. Although I was not allowed to write to you, I ought to have written to your brother Gregory long ago,

and I am ashamed of myself. But I am much more ashamed of the reason, and I will make no sham excuses. It is difficult to say what I want to say; but my only amends is to tell the whole truth, and I hope that you will try to allow for me.

"And the truth is this. I fell in love: not as I did with you, my darling, just because I loved you; but because—well, I cannot tell why, although I am trying for the very truth; I cannot tell why I did it. She saved my life, and nursed me long. She was not bad-looking; but young and brave.

"I hope that it is all over now. I trust in the Lord that it is so. I see that these Spaniards are cruel people, and I work night and day to forget them all. When I get any sleep, it is you that come and look upon me beautifully; and when I kick up with those plaguesome insects, the face that I see is a Spanish one. This alone shows where my heart is fixed. But you have none of those things at Old Applewood.

"And now I can say no more. I write in the midst of roaring cannon, and perhaps you will say, when you see my words, that I had

better have died of my wounds, than lived to disgrace, as I have done, your

"HILARY.

"P.S.—Try to think the best of me, darling. If anybody needs it, I do. Gregory wrote me such a letter that I am afraid to send you any—anythings!"

CHAPTER XXII.

SOMETHING WORTH KISSING.

Pessimists who love to dwell on the darker side of human nature, and find (or at any rate colour) that perpetually changing object to the tone of their own dull thoughts, making our whole world no better than the chameleon of themselves; who trace every act and word and thought, either to very mean selfishness, or exceedingly grand destiny—according to their own pet theory,—let those gloomy spirits migrate in as cheerful a manner as they can manage to the back side of the moon, the side that neither shines on earth, nor gathers any earthshine. But even if they will not thus oblige inferior mortals, let them not come near a scene where true love dwells, and simple faith, and pleasant hours are spent in helping nature to be kind to us.

Where the rich recesses of the bosomed earth brim over with variety; where every step of man discloses some new goodness over him; and every hour of the day shows different veins of happiness; the light in sloping glances looking richer as the sun goes down, and showing with a deeper love its own good works and parentage; the children of the light presenting all their varied joy to it; some revolving, many bending, all with one accord inclining softly, sweetly, and thankfully,—can any man, even of a churlish nature, wander about at a time like this, with the power of the sunset over him, and walk down the alleys of trees, and spend a leisure hour among them, without admitting into his heart a calm unconscious kindliness?

If any man could be so ungrateful to the Giver of all good things, he was not to be found in the land of Kent, but must be sought in some northern county where they grow sour gooseberries. Master Martin Lovejoy had, in the month of October, 1812, as fine a crop of pears as ever made a fountain of a tree.

For the growers did not understand the pruning of trees as we do now. They were a benighted lot altogether, proceeding only by

rule of thumb and the practice of their grandfathers, never lopping the roots of a tree, nor summer pinching, nor wiring it, nor dislocating its joints; and yet they grew as good fruit as we do! They had no right to do so; but the thing is beyond denial. Therefore one might see a pear-tree rising in its natural form, tall and straight, and goodly, hanging its taper branches like a chandelier with lustrous weight, tier upon tier, the rich fruit glistening with the ruddy sun-streaks, or with russet veinage melowing. Hard thereby the Golden Noble, globular and stainless, or the conical King Pippin, pencilled on its orange fulness with a crimson glow, or the great bulk of Dutch Codlin, oblong, ribbed and over-bearing. Here was the place and the time for a man to sit in the midst of his garden, and feel that the year was not gone in vain, nor his date of life lessened fruitlessly, and looking round with right good will, thank the Lord, and remember his father.

In such goodly mood and tenor Master Martin Lovejoy sat, early of an October afternoon, to smoke his pipe and enjoy himself. He had finished his dinner—a plain but good one; his teeth were sound, and diges-

tion stanch; he paid his tithes and went to church; he had not an enemy in the world, to the utmost of his knowledge; and his name was good for a thousand pounds from Canterbury to Reigate. His wheat had been fine, and his hops pretty good, his barley by no means below the mark, the cherry and strawberry season fair, and his apples and pears as you see them. Such a man would be guilty of a great mistake if he kept on the tramp perpetually. Fortune encouraged him to sit down, and set an arm-chair and a cushion for him, and mixed him a glass of Schiedam and water, with a slice of lemon, and gave him a wife to ask how his feet were, as well as a daughter to see to his slippers.

"Now you don't get on at all," he said, as he mixed Mrs. Lovejoy the least little drop, because of the wind going round to the north; "you are so abstemious, my dear soul; by-and-by you will pay out for it."

"I must be a disciplinarian, Martin," Mrs. Lovejoy replied, with a sad sweet smile. "How ever the ladies can manage to take beer, wine, gin, bitters, and brandy, in the way they do, all of an afternoon, is beyond my comprehension."

"They get used to it," answered the Grower, calmly; "and their constitution requires it. At the same time I am not saying, mind you, that some of them may not overdo it. Moderation is the golden rule; but you carry it too far, my dear."

"Better too little than too much," said Mrs. Lovejoy, sententiously. "Whatever I take, I like just to know that there is something in it, and no more. No, Martin, no—if you please, not more than the thickness of my thumb-nail. Well, now for what we were talking about. We can never go on like this, you know."

"Wife, I will tell you what it is"—here Martin Lovejoy tried to look both melancholy and stern, but failed; "we do not use our duties right; we do not work up in the position to which it has pleased God to call us. We don't make our children see that they are—bless my heart, what is the word?"

"'Obligated' is the word you mean. 'Obligated' they all of them are."

"No, no; 'bounden' is the word I mean; 'bounden' says the Catechism. They are bounden to obey, whether they like it or no, and that is the word's expression. Now is there one of them as does it?"

"I can't say there is," his wife replied, after thinking of all three of them. "Martin, no; they do their best, but you can't have them quite tied hand and foot. And I doubt whether we should love them better, if we had them always to order."

"Likely not. I cannot tell. They have given me no chance of trying. They do what seems best in their own eyes, and the fault of it lies with you, mother."

"Do they ever do anything wrong, Martin Lovejoy? Do they ever disgrace you anywhere? Do they ever go about and borrow money, or trade on their name, or anything? Surely you want to provoke me, Martin, when you begin to revile my children."

"Well," said the Grower, blowing smoke, in the manner of a matrimonial man, "let us go to something else. Here is this affair of Mabel's now. How do you mean to settle it?"

"I think you should rather tell me, Martin, how you mean to settle it. She might have been settled long ago, in a good position and comfortable, if my advice had been heeded. But you are the most obstinate man in the world."

"Well, well, my dear, I don't think that you should be hard upon any one in that respect.

You have set your heart upon one thing, and I upon another; and we have to deal with some one perhaps more obstinate than both of us. She takes after her good mother there."

"After her father, more likely, Martin. But she has given her promise, and she will keep it, and the time is very nearly up, you know."

"The battle of Trafalgar, yes. The 21st of October, seven years ago, as I am a man! Lord bless me, it seems but yesterday! How all the country up and wept, and how it sent our boy to sea! There never can be such a thing again; and no one would look at a drumhead savoy!"

"Plague upon the market, Martin! I do believe you think much more of your growings than your gainings. But she fixed the day herself, because it was a battle; didn't she?"

"Yes, wife, yes. But after all, I see not so much to come of it. Supposing she gets no letter by to-morrow-night, what comes of it?"

"Why, a very great deal. You men never know. She puts all her foolish ideas aside, and she does her best to be sensible."

"By the spread of my measure, oh deary me! I thought she was bound to much more than that. She gives up him, at any rate."

"Yes, poor dear, she gives him up, and a precious cry she will make of it. Why, Martin, when you and I were young we carried on so differently."

"What use to talk about that?" said the Grower: "they all must have their romances now. Like tapping a cask of beer, it is. You must let them spit out at the top a little."

"All that, of course, needs no discussion. I do not remember that, in our love-time, you expected to see me 'spit out at the top!' You grow so coarse in your ideas, Martin; the more you go growing, the coarser you get."

"Now, is there nothing to be said but that? She gives him up, and she tries to be sensible. The malting season is on, and how can Elias come and do anything?"

"Martin, may I say one word? You keep so perpetually talking, that I scarcely have a chance to breathe. We do not want that low Jenkins here. How many quarters he soaks in a week is nothing, and cannot be anything to me. A tanner is more to my taste a great deal, if one must come down to the dressers. And there one might get some good ox-tails. I believe that you want to sell your daughter to get your malt for nothing."

The Grower's indignation at this despicable charge was such, that he rolled in his chair, like a man in a boat, and spread his sturdy legs, and said nothing, for fear of further mischief. Then he turned out his elbows, in a manner of his own, and Mrs. Lovejoy saw that she had gone too far.

"Well, well," she resumed, "perhaps not quite that. Mr. Jenkins, no doubt, is very well in his way: and he shall have fair play, so far as I am concerned. But mind, Dr. Calvert must have the same; that was our bargain, Martin. All the days of the week to be open to both, and no difference in the dinner."

"Very well, very well!" the franklin murmured, being still a little wounded about the malt. "I am sure I put up with anything. Calvert may have her, if he can cure her. I can't bear to see the poor maid so pining. It makes my heart ache many a time; but I have more faith in barley-corn than jalap; though I don't want neither of them for nothing."

"We shall see, my dear, how she will come round. The doctor prescribes carriage exercise for her. Well, how is she to get it, except in his carriage? And she cannot well have

his carriage, I suppose, before she marries him."

"Carriage exercise? Riding on wheels, I suppose, is what they mean by it. If riding on wheels will do her any good, she can have our yellow gig five times a-week. And I want to go round the neighbourhood too. There's some little bits of money owing me. I'll take her for a drive to-morrow."

"Your yellow gig! To call that a carriage! A rough sort of exercise, I doubt. Why, it jerks up, like a Jack-in-a-box, at every stone you come to. If that is your idea of a carriage, Martin, pray take us all out in the dung-cart."

"The old gig was good enough for my mother; and why should my daughter be above it? They doctors and women are turning her head, worse than poor young Lorraine did. Oh, if I had Elias to prune my trees—after all I have taught him—and Lorraine to get up in the yan again; I might keep out of the bankrupt court after all; I do believe I might." Here the Grower fetched a long sigh through his pipe. He was going to be bankrupt every season; but never achieved that glory.

"I'm tired of that," Mrs. Lovejoy said. "You used to frighten me with it at first, when-

ever there came any sort of weather—a storm, or a frost, or too much sun, or too much rain, or too little of it; the Lord knows that if you have had any fruit, you have got it out of Him by grumbling. And now you are longing, in a heathenish manner, to marry your daughter to two men at once! One for the night-work, and one for the day. Now, will you, for once, speak your mind out truly."

"Well, wife, there is no one that tries a man so badly as his own wife does. I am pretty well known for speaking my mind too plainly, more than too doubtfully. I can't say the same to you, as I should have to say to anybody else; because you are my wife you see, and have a good right to be down upon me. And so I am forced to get away from things that ought to be argued. But about my daughter, I have a right to think my own opinion; while I leave your own to you, as a father has a right with a mother. And all I say is common-sense. Our Mabel belongs to a time of life when the girls are always dreaming. And then you may say what you like to them mainly; and it makes no difference. Now she looks very pale, and she feels very queer, all through that young sort of mischief. But let her get a letter from Master

Hilary—and you would see what would come over her."

"I have got it! I have got it!" cried a young voice, as if in answer, although too sudden of approach for that. "Father, here it is! Mother, here it is! Long expected, come at last! There, what do you think of that now?"

Her face was lit with a smile of delight, and her eyes with tears of gladness, as she stood between her astonished parents, and waved in the air an open letter, fluttering less (though a breeze was blowing) than her true heart fluttered. Then she pressed the paper to her lips, and kissed it, with a good smack every time; and then she laid it against her bosom, and bowed to her father and mother, as much as to say—"You may think what you like of me—I am not ashamed of it!"

The Grower pushed two grey curls aside, and looked up with a grand amazement. Here was a girl, who at dinner-time even would scarcely say more than "yes," or "no;" who started when suddenly spoken to, and was obliged to clear her mind to think; who smiled now and then, when a smile was expected, and not because she had a smile,—in a word, who

had become a dull, careless, unnatural, cloudy, depressed, and abominably inconsistent Mabel —a cause of anxiety to her father, and of recklessness to herself—when lo, at a touch of the magic wand, here she was, as brave as ever!

The father, and the mother also, knew the old expression settled on the darling face again; the many family modes of thinking, and of looking, and of loving, and of feeling out for love, which only a father and a mother dearly know in a dear child's face. And then they looked at one another; and in spite of all small variance, the husband and the wife were one in the matter of rejoicing.

It was not according to their schemes, and they both might still be obstinate. But by a stroke their hearts were opened — wise or foolish, right or wrong,—what they might say outside reason, they really could not stop to think. They only saw that their sweet good child, for many long months a stranger to them, was come home to their hearts again. And they could have no clearer proof than this.

She took up her father's pipe, and sniffed with a lofty contempt at the sealing-wax (which was of the very lowest order), and then she snapped it off, and scraped him (with a tortoise-

shell handled knife of her own) a proper place to suck at. And while she was doing that, and most busy with one of her fingers to make a draught, she turned to her mother with her other side, as only a very quick girl could do, and tucked up some hair (which was slipping from the string, with a palpable breach of the unities) and gave her two tugs, in the very right place to make her of the latest fashion; and then let her know, with lips alone, what store she set on her opinion. And the whole of this business was done in less time than two lovers would take for their kissing!

"You have beaten me, Popsy," said Mrs. Lovejoy, fetching up an old name of the days when she was nursing this one.

"Dash me," cried the Grower, "you shall marry Old Harry, if you choose to set your heart on him."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DANGEROUS COMMISSION.

PERADVENTURE the eyes and the heart, as well as the boundless charity of true love, were needed to descry what Mabel at a glance discovered, the "grand nobility" of Hilary's conduct, and the "pathetic beauty" of his self-reproach. Perhaps at first sight the justice of the latter would be a more apparent thing; but love (when it deserves the name) is a generous as well as a jealous power; especially in the tender gush of renewal and re-union. And Lorraine meant every word as he wrote it, and indeed for a good while afterwards; so that heart took pen to heart, which is sometimes better than the wings of speech. Giving comfort thus, he also received the same from his own conscience and pure resolutions; and he felt that his good angel was, for the present at

least, come back to him. How long she would stop, was another question.

And he needed her now in matters even more stirring than the hottest love-affairs. For though he had no chance of coming to the front in any of the desperate assaults on the castle of Burgos, being far away then with despatches, he was back with his chief when the retreat began; a retreat which must have become a rout under any but the finest management. For the British army was at its worst towards the month of November, 1812. Partly from intercourse with *partidas*, partly perhaps from the joys of Madrid, but mainly no doubt from want of cash, the Britons were not as they had been. Even the officers dared to be most thoroughly disobedient, and to follow the route which they thought best, instead of that laid down for them. But Wellington put up with insolent ignorance, as a weaker man could not have deigned to do: he had to endure it from those above him; and he knew how to bear it with all around him; and yet to be the master. His manifold dealings with everybody and everything at this time (with nobody caring to understand him, and his own people set against him; with the whole world making

little of him, because he hated flash-work; and perhaps his own mind in some doubt of its powers, because they were not recognized)—these, and the wearisome uphill struggle to be honest without any money, were beginning to streak with grey the hair that had all the hard brain under it.

Here again was a chance for Hilary; and without thinking, he worked it well. In his quick, and perhaps too sudden, way of taking impression of every one, he had stamped on his mind the abiding image of his great commander. The General knew this (as all men feel the impression they are making, as sharply almost as a butter-stamp), and of course he felt goodwill towards the youth, who so looked up to him. It was quite a new thing for this great Captain, after all his years of conquest, to be accounted of any value; because he was not a Frenchman.

Being, however, of rigid justice, although he was no Frenchman, Lord Wellington did not lift Captain Lorraine over the heads of his compeers. He only marked him (in his own clear and most tenacious mind) as one who might be trusted for a dashing job, and deserved to have the chance of it.

And so they went into winter quarters on the Douro and Aguada, after a great deal of fighting, far in the rear of their storms and sieges and their many victories; because the British Government paid whole millions right and left to rogues, and left its own army to live without money, and to be hanged if it stole an onion. And the only satisfaction our men had —and even in that they were generous—was to hear of the Frenchmen in Russia freezing as fast as could well be expected.

Now, while this return to the frontier, and ebb of success created disgust in England and depression among our soldiers, they also bore most disastrously on the fortunes of a certain gallant and very zealous Staff officer. For they brought him again into those soft meshes, whence he had wellnigh made good his escape without any serious damage; but now there was no such deliverance for him. And this was a very hard case, and he really did deserve some pity now; for he did not return of his own accord, and fall at the feet of the charmer; but in the strictest course of duty became an unwilling victim. And it happened altogether in this wise.

In the month of May, 1813, when the

British commander had all things ready for that glorious campaign which drove the French over the Pyrenees; and when the British army, freshened, strengthened, and sternly rediscplined, was eager to bound forward—a sudden and sad check arose. By no means, however, a new form of hindrance, but one only too familiar, at all times and in all countries—the sinews of war were not forthcoming. The military chest was empty. The pay of the British troops was far in arrear, and so was their bounty-money; but that they were pretty well used to by this time, and grumble as they might, they were ready to march. Not so, however, the Portuguese, who were now an important element; and even the Spanish regulars in Andalusia would do nothing, until they had handled dollars.

This need of money had been well foreseen by the ubiquitous mind of Wellington; but what he had not allowed for, and what no one else would have taken into thought, so soon after Nelson's time, was the sluggishness of the British navy. Whether it were the fault of our Government, or of our Admiral on the station, certain it is that the mouth of the Tagus (which was the mouth of the whole

British army) was stopped for days, and even weeks together, by a few American privateers. And ships containing supplies for our army (whether of food, or clothing, or the even more needful British gold), if they escaped at all, could do it only by running for the dangerous bar of the Douro, or for Cadiz.

In this state of matters, the "Generalissimo" sent for Captain Lorraine one day, and despatched him on special duty.

"You know Count Zamora," said Lord Wellington, in his clear voice of precision; "and his castle in the Sierra Morena."

Hilary bowed, without a word, knowing well what his Chief was pleased with.

"You also know the country well, and the passes of the Morena. Colonel Langham has orders to furnish you with the five best horses at hand, and the two most trusty men he knows of. You will go direct to Count Zamora's house, and deliver to him this letter. He will tell you what next to do. I believe that the ship containing the specie, which will be under your charge, was unable to make either Lisbon or the port of Cadiz, and ran through the Straits for Malaga. But the Count will know better than I do. Remember that you

are placed at his disposal, in all except one point—and that is the money. He will provide you with Spanish escort, and the Spaniards are liable for the money, through Andalusia and the mountains, until you cross the Zujar, where a detachment from General Hill will meet you. They begged me not to send British convoy (beyond what might be needful, to authorize the delivery to them), because their own troops are in occupation.

"Never mind that; be as wide awake as if every farthing was your own, or rather was part of your honour. I seldom place so young a man in a position of so much trust. But the case is peculiar; and I trust you. There will be £100,000, in English gold, to take care of. The Spaniards will furnish the transport, and Count Zamora will receive half of the specie, on behalf of the Junta of Seville, for the pay of the Spanish forces, and give you his receipt for it. The remainder you will place under the care of General Hill's detachment, and rejoin us as soon as possible. I have no time more. Colonel Langham will give you your passes, and smaller directions. But remember that you are in a place of trust unusual for so young an officer. Good-bye, and keep a sharp look-out."

Lord Wellington gave his hand, with a bow of the fine old type, to Hilary. And he from his proper salute recovered, and took it as one gentleman takes the courtesy of another. But as he felt that firm, and cool, and muscular hand for a moment, he knew that he was treated with extraordinary confidence; and that his future as an officer, and perhaps as a gentleman, hung on the manner in which he should acquit himself of so rare a trust. In the courtyard he found Colonel Langham, who gave him some written instructions, and his passes and credentials, as well as a good deal of sound advice, which the General had no time to give. And in another hour Hilary Lorraine was riding away in the highest spirits, thinking of Mabel, and of all his luck; and little dreaming that he was galloping into the ditch of his fortunes.

Behind him rode two well-tried troopers, as thoroughly trained to their work as the best hereditary butler, gamekeeper, or even pointer. There could be found no steadier men in all the world of steadiness. One was Sergeant-major Bones, and the other was Corporal Nickles. Each of them led a spare horse by the soft brown twist of willow-bark, steeped in

tan and fish-oil, so as to make a horse think much of it. And thus they rode through the brilliant night, upon a fine old Roman road, with beautiful change, and lovely air, and nobody to challenge them. For the French army lay to the east and north; the Portuguese were far in their rear; and the Spanish forces away to the south, except a few guerillas, who could take nothing by meddling with them. But the next day was hot, and the road grew rough, and their horses fell weary; and, haste as they might, they did not arrive at Monte Argento till after sunset of the second day.

The Count of Zamora felt some affection, as well as much gratitude, towards Lorraine, and showed it through the lofty courtesy with which he received him. And Hilary, on his part, could not help admiring the valour, and patriotism, and almost poetic dignity, of this chieftain of a time gone by. For being of a simple mind, and highly valuing eloquence, the Count nearly always began with a flourish as to what he might have done for the liberation of his country; if he had been younger. Having exhausted this reflection, he was wont to proceed at leisure to the military virtues of his sons. Then, if anybody showed impatience, he

always stopped with a lofty bow; otherwise, on he went, and the further he went, the more he enjoyed himself. Hilary, a very polite young man, and really a kind-hearted one, had grown into the Count's good graces—setting aside all gratitude—by truly believing all his exploits, and those of his father and grandfathers, and best of all those of his two sons,—and never so much as yawning.

"You are at my orders?" said the Count, with a dry smile on his fine old face. "It is well, my son; it is glorious. Our great commander has so commanded. My first order is that you come to the supper; and rest, and wear slippers, for the three days to follow."

"Shall I take those instructions in writing," asked Hilary; "and under the seal of the Junta?"

"The Junta is an old woman," said his host; "she chatters, and she scolds, and she locks up the money. But enter, my son, enter, I pray you. You are at the very right moment arrived—as is your habit; or I should not be here. We have a young boar of the first nobility; and truffles are in him from the banks which you know. You shall carve him for us;

you are so strong, and you Englishmen so understand sharp steel. My sons are still at the war; but my daughters—how will they be pleased to see you!"

At the smell of the innocent young roaster —for such he was in verity,—light curtains rose, and light figures entered; for all Spanish ladies know well what is good. Camilla and Claudia greeted Hilary, as if they had been with him all the morning; and turned their whole minds to the table at once. And Hilary, thoroughly knowing their manners, only said to himself, how well they looked!

In this he was right. The delicate grace and soft charm of Camilla set off the more brilliant and defiant beauty of young Claudia. Neither of them seemed to care in the least what anybody thought of her; or whether any thought at all occurred to anybody, upon a subject so indifferent, distant, and purely abstract. Captain Lorraine was no more to them than a friar, or pilgrim, or hermit. They were very much obliged to him for cutting up the pig; and they showed that they thought it a good pig.

Now, as it happened, these were not the

tactics fitted for the moment. In an ordinary mood, Lorraine might have fallen to these fair Parthians; but knowing what danger he was running into—without any chance of avoiding it—he had made up his mind, all along the road, to be severely critical. Mabel's true affection (as shown by a letter in answer to his) had moved him; she had not hinted at any rival, or lapse of love on his part; but had told with all her dear warm heart the pleasure, the pride, and the love she felt. Hilary had this letter in his pocket; and it made him inclined to be critical.

Now it may, without any lese-majesty of the grand female race, be asserted, that good, and kind, and beautiful, and purely superior as they are, they are therewith so magnanimous to men, that they abstain, for the most part, from exhibiting too much cruel perfection. No specimen of them seems ever to occur that is entirely blameless, if submitted to rigid criticism; which, of course, they would never submit to. Therefore it was wrong of Hilary, and showed him in a despicable light, that because the young ladies would not look at him much, he looked at them with judicial eyes. And the

result of his observation, over the backbone of the pig, was this.

In "physique"—a word which ought to be worse than physic to an Englishman—there was no fault of any sort to be found with either of these young ladies. They were noble examples of the best Spanish type, tall, and pure, yet rich of tint, with most bewitching eyes, and classic flexure of luxuriant hair, grace in every turn and gesture, and melody in every tone. Yet even in the most expressive glance, and most enchanting smile, was there any of that simple goodness, loyalty, and comfort, which were to be found in an equally lovely, but less superb young woman?

Herewith the young Captain began to think of his Uncle Struan's advice, and even his sister's words on the matter; which from so haughty a girl—as he called her, although he knew that she was not that—had caused him at first no small surprise, and at the same time produced no small effect. And the end of it was that he gave a little squeeze to Mabel's portrait and loving letter; and said to himself that one English girl was worth a dozen Spanish ones.

On the following day, the fair young Donnas changed their mode of action. They vied with each other in attention to Hilary, led him through the well-known places, chattered Spanish most musically, and sang melting love-songs, lavished smiles and glances on him; and nothing was too good for him. He was greatly delighted, of course, and was bound in gratitude to flirt a little; but still, on the whole, he behaved very well. For instance, he gave no invidious preference to either of his lovely charmers; but paid as much heed to poor Camilla (whose heart was bounding with love and happiness) as he did to Claudia; who began to be in earnest now, that her sister might not conquer him. This was a dangerous turn of events for Hilary; and it was lucky for him that he was promptly called away. For his host got despatches, which compelled him to cut short hospitality; and Captain Lorraine, with great relief, set forth the next morning for Malaga. Sergeant Bones and Corporal Nickles had carried on handsomely downstairs, and were most loth to come away; but duty is always the guiding-star of the noble British Corporal. Nickles and Bones, at the

call of their country, cast off all domestic ties, and buckled up their belly-bands. Merrily thus they all rode on, for their horses were fresh and frolicsome, to the Spanish head-quarters near Cordova; and forward thence to Malaga.

END OF VOL. II.

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